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# **PRIVATE PURKEY'S PRIVATE PEACE**





# Private Purkey's Private Peace

by

H. I. PHILLIPS

*Illustrations by Sergeant Leonard Sansone*

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS, NEW YORK

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Manufactured in the United States of America

To  
THE FIGHTING MEN AND WOMEN EVERYWHERE WHO ARE DE-  
TERMINED THAT THE PEACE SHALL THIS TIME BRING  
THEM "MORE THAN A MUSHFULL OF TICKER TAPE,  
A PARADE UNDER A LOT OF VICTORY ARCHES,  
BEHIND A FLOCK OF GIRL DRUM MAJORS,  
AND A THEME SONG ABOUT  
BROTHERLY LOVE."—

AND  
TO  
CELIA  
WHO BEGAN WITH HELPFUL HINTS  
AND FINISHED AS A CO-AUTHOR

M251931

*All persons in this book, excepting a few well-known world leaders, are fictional. Any resemblance to any other person or persons alive, dead, or in the intermediate stage experienced after a long ride in a jeep, is purely accidental.*

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# **PRIVATE PURKEY'S PRIVATE PEACE**



## *Chapter I*

### IN THE POSTWAR WORLD . . . OR NEARLY SO

IT WAS 1952.

The postwar world was in full swing, all gears meshing. Oscar Purkey, seven years home from the global wars, had had an eventful day. Asking too much of his jet-flivver, he had tangled with a V-10 taxicab. He had been battered up, but the rocket-ambulance, arriving with postwar miracle drugs, had repaired and reassembled him in about the time ordinarily required to clip a hangnail.

Arriving home after a total delay of but a few minutes, Oscar found his wife, Harriet, all in from a harrowing afternoon with the prefabricated home agents. The Purkeys had turned in their 1950 six-room bungalow for a 1952 model, on a nice trade-in allowance. It had arrived and been set up that day with lawn, landscaping, and lagoon attached, but there had been a few unsatisfactory details. Harriet hadn't liked the dining room for one thing, and after much bickering the company had replaced it with something snappier, an operation merely requiring the essential monkey wrenches.

The master bathroom, lacking fluorescent lighting, had not seemed up to the catalogue illustration, but the agents had persuaded her to try it out for size for ten days,

promising to take it out and install a new one if desired.

"Some shack!" exclaimed Oscar. "Are we living in this one for the long pull or a quick turnover?"

"Oh, this will do for months," said Harriet. "It has everything, including those new General Electric walls that absorb the sun's rays all day and release the stored-up light for early evening illumination. Tricky, eh?"

"Them trees! Them rocks and rills! That lagoon!" exclaimed Oscar admiringly, as he looked into the yard.

"They all came with the house. And there's a spare lagoon in case of a dry spell," said Harriet.

"They sure think of everything in this postwar world," sighed Oscar. "They sure do."

The Purkey offspring, "Bucky," now ten, came zooming by the bay window astride a curious contraption that threw off sparks and resembled something between the Hound of the Baskervilles and a robot flame thrower.

"What's that?" asked Oscar.

"Jet-bike," replied Harriet. "He handles it well, don't you think?"

Oscar shook his head and resumed chatting with the wife. He had said nothing about his accident, knowing how she felt about him running around in that 150-miles-per-hour vehicle.

"You look pale and worried," Harriet remarked. "Don't fret too much about being out of work. It's only two weeks, honey. Something will turn up."

"Oh, I meant to tell you," said Oscar. "I found a job."

"You did! How?"

"Radar," said Oscar buoyantly. "The government did a swell thing fitting the unemployed out with them radar sets. I got one this morning and it located a ten-thousand-dollar-a-year job for me in no time!"

"How wonderful! What's the job, honey bunch?"

"I'll give you all the dope later. The big point is that I only work from ten to two with two hours off for lunch."

"That's only two hours of work a day!" she said.

"Yeah. I get twelve dollars an hour, the new wage set by the PWWCB—Postwar World Wage Control Board—and I get Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays off. Well, I guess I'll wash up."

"You'll adore that new bathtub with the aurora borealis shower that sprays you in a choice of eight colors," beamed Harriet. "Try the chartreuse and pink, with soap to match!"

"Hey!" called Oscar from the bedroom a moment later. "What's this rug? It's new, ain't it?"

"It was put in on trial," said Harriet. "You know how one has to fumble around for a light in the middle of the night?"

"Yeah."

"Well, the minute you get out of bed and your feet touch this rug it automatically turns on a floodlight. Next to the luminous doorways which glow in the dark, it's the most wonderful thing in our new home."

"I'll say!" grunted Oscar.

He disappeared into the bathroom.

"Look," he called out presently. "How about this form-fit space in the wall?"

"Oh, that!" called back Harriet. "You just get in and throw the switch. It gives you your vitamins, forecasts tomorrow's weather, massages your scalp, and hands you a bathrobe made of soybeans."

"Cripes! The war wasn't fought in vain," said Oscar.

He shaved, washed, and called to Harriet a little later, "Honey, did my suit come back from the glazier's?"

"The glazier's?" she repeated, puzzled for a second.

"Yeah, it's that suit made of glass," said Oscar.

"Oh," said Harriet. "That's back and as good as new. It's in your closet."

Just before dinner Oscar thought he'd have a cocktail. He threw the proper lever on the electric Drinkograph for a Manhattan.

"What—no cherry?" he demanded, with some displeasure.

"You'll find the cherry in powdered form right there in the slot," explained Harriet.

"Oh, yeah. I forgot."

When they were ready for dinner Harriet pressed a button and the Dishless Dinner Table came out of the wall. It was a device with depressions for dishes and cups. It did away completely with real dishes.

After dinner Harriet threw the switch and the table went back into the wall where it was sealed tightly and automatically sprayed with soapy hot water, then dried by electronic germ-killing rays...all accompanied by soft music.

"I'd like to see a good show tonight," said Mrs. Purkey.

"O.K.," said Oscar, going to the deluxe combination heating unit, air-conditioning tube, refrigerator, phonograph, radio, and television set, and pressing the necessary button for the Follies.

A newscast was preceding the curtain's rise. Another presidential election campaign was on and, as the candidate beamed upon them from the television screen, life-size, both winced as Oscar switched him out.

"Runnin' on that slogan that burns me up," said Oscar.

"Which one is that?" Harriet wanted to know.



“‘A two-rocket garage and a dehydrated turkey in every pot,’” explained Oscar.

The Follies followed but the show wasn't so hot and they tuned out.

“I gotta hit the hay early tonight,” yawned Oscar. “Two big days ahead of me in Europe and Asia.”

“What's doing?”

“Another Legion convention. Holding it in Chicago, London, Paris, and Moscow this time.”

“But honey, I asked the McGees to dinner night after tomorrow.”

“I'll be back by that time!” said Oscar. “The gang's going by stratoliners.”

“Oh, dear!” said Harriet suddenly. “I almost forgot . . . you've got to walk the dog now.”

“I told you I'd pay to have one of them new automatic dog exercisers installed in this house,” squawked Oscar. “You put the pooch into it and everything is taken care of by violet rays, treadmills, and electric whistles.”

“We can't afford any more of these postwar world novelties,” said Harriet, “until I decide about that new coin-in-the-slot front doorbell.”

“What the hell is that?” asked Oscar.

“I'm having a demonstration tomorrow.”

“But what's it for?”

“Anybody who wants to ring the bell has to deposit ten cents first.”

“What's the idea?”

“Nobody will bother us unless it's important,” explained Harriet. “It keeps away all the Gallup Poll men, census takers, and agents with more questionnaires.”

“Postwar world, of thee I sing,” caroled Oscar. “Ain't it grand?”

“It would be, except for that item that just came

by television, together with pictures of the German staff. It said Germany was threatening another war," Harriet said gloomily.

"That's succotash," declared Oscar firmly. "Russia, England, and us will just call out our Combined Peace Preserving Emergency Bomber Squads and shut 'em up in no time. They know what we can do with the new robot sixteen-jet Trouble Supressors. They're terrific."

"Dear, I hope you're right and that there will never be another war," sighed Harriet with deep feeling.

"There ain't no chance," assured Oscar. "War is done for forever...."

A terrific explosion hurled Oscar through the air. He poked his noggin out of a pile of plaster, saw that he was still alive, and looked around, dazed.

He was in the ruins of a German farmhouse. Shells were still screaming and he vaguely saw figures groping through the debris.

"Hey, Harriet!" he called. "Honey bunch! What happened?"

"Harriet!" mocked a battered buddy. "Honey bunch! Lissen to the meathead! Hey, where the hell do you think you are?"

Pfc Purkey was still muddled.

"I gotta get to that Legion convention," he mumbled, staggering to his feet. "What goes on?"

A sergeant shook him out of it.

"Hey, whattzamattah with you?" demanded the sarge. "You been hit or what? Huh?"

"Yeah, I guess so," blurted Oscar, now coming to his senses. "I just got blown outa a swell dream." He knew now that he was back in 1945 and very much in the thick of hostilities.

"Snap out of it," commanded the sergeant. "Come on, gang, on the double!"

A buddy, Pfc Matt Hollis, brushed past Oscar and, amused at his bewilderment, yelled, "Hey, Oscar, it's all aboard again to help make that bright new world of tomorrow! Ain't you comin'?"

"Comin'!" said Purkey, grabbing his Garand and taking up the war anew with a heavy sigh.

## *Chapter II*

### SWING LOW, SWEET ARMISTICE

#### ARMISTICE!

The word swept the battlefronts. It had come at last, plunging the fighting men into a state as close to hysteria as military conditions permitted.

And it had caught Oscar Purkey in the middle of his backswing with a hand grenade, too late to call off the pitch, although he had managed to cut down on distance and speed.

Pfc Purkey, former filling-station attendant, was much more of a fighting man than he looked. One glance at him would show that he had to be. He was tall, skinny, straw-haired, and a little round-shouldered, and there was nothing about his countenance to indicate that he would be effective even in a fight over a long-distance telephone. A cynical bystander, observing him long before, in his undies at an induction center, had remarked, "Twenty to one on Hitler!"

But in the war he had crossed the critics up and established himself as a tough battler when the chips were down.

Now, exhausted from immediate relaxations of army discipline and self-control, he found himself sitting in a

pile of rubble and manure in the lee of what was left of the barns of Heinrich Hausmann in a village a few miles beyond the German Rhine. The manure pile had a few minutes before represented an important point in a drive against the Krauts. On any maps it would have been imposingly marked as a place of importance in the global war.

Now, with the armistice, it had become a manure pile again.

Pfc Purkey sank into it with such an air of happiness and comfort that one might have assumed he had nestled into a luxurious divan at the Waldorf-Astoria.

"It's a dream come true," he chirped.

"Boy, you ain't dreamin'," said his buddy, Matt Hollis, relaxing beside him.

"Maybe not now, but I was," insisted Oscar. "Only a coupla nights ago—remember that time we got blitzed in that last farmhouse we was in?—I come out of my dream callin' for Harriet. I was just havin' a dream that all wars was over and I was sittin' pretty in a swell postwar world. It had luminous doorways."

"It'll need 'em," cracked Hollis.

"Yeah, I guess so," said Oscar.

"You dreamed the Army into an armistice, now try your hand at dreamin' it into a better place to relax and welcome in the bright new world. What a hell of a spot to welcome it this is . . . a manure heap!" Hollis exclaimed.

"I wouldn't notice," said Oscar. "I never felt so comfortable and happy in all my life. Are you sure this is a manure pile, you bein' a good judge?"

"I don't have to be a good judge to identify this pile," said Hollis. "You'd better shoo that goose away before it pecks out one of your eyes."

Oscar made a pass at the goose and in the process also scared away a pig that was nosing around the war-torn premises.

"Hudson," Oscar said, burlesquing a scene he had seen in a movie, "I'm not gettin' up today. I'm havin' breakfast in bed. And be careful with the tray as you climb up this dunghill! Mind you don't stumble! If General Eisenhower phones tell him I am restin' and do not wish to be disturbed."

"Oh, my God!" moaned Hollis.

"Place the morning papers over there on that crock of garbage, Hudson, that's a good man. And fetch me another pillow from that rock pile! The slab I have under my noggin now is a little jagged for comfort. Oh, and Hudson, my good man, shove that goat away. He's got his nose in my breakfast tray."

"You've got your nose in his!" corrected Hollis.

"Don't split hairs. We got true democracy now, ain't we?" returned Oscar.

Hollis got up from the manure pile and brushed himself off. "This place stinks," he said. "What a spot to finish a war!"

"I ain't particular where no war finishes as long as it is finished," snapped Oscar. "You are one of them doughfeet who is hard to satisfy. A few hours ago with shells screamin' over your bean and bullets zippin' by your big ears you wouldn't of cared if you had of wound up at the bottom of a latrine, if it would of meant a order to cease firin'. Think of it! No bombers overhead, no enemy tanks blastin' at us, no machine guns barkin', nobody even tossin' no hard looks at us anywhere! This is perfect."

"It's still a manure pile," snapped Hollis, "and it becomes you."



"I'm having breakfast in bed today, Hudson! If Eisenhower phones tell him I do not wish to be disturbed."

"Thanks, old-timer. It's the most beautiful one in the world! Mind if I kiss that goat?"

"No. It looks like a friendly goat."

"Friend or foe, I am in the mood," declared Oscar, as he looked directly into the eyes of the animal. "Goat, at the moment you are practically Lana Turner to me!"

"It's a good thing that antelope has no sweater," said Hollis.

"Don't tell me it ain't got none!"

"This guy is crazy," said Matt Hollis as Corporal Herman Feinstein rounded the barn with a bottle in his hand.

"He's got a swell day for it," said Feinstein, seeking a spot beside Oscar. "Move over, runt!"

"There's a softer spot over the other end for corporals," said Private Purkey.

"I ain't particular at the moment," said Feinstein.

None of the boys in the group had known the corporal back home, but they had heard about him. Out of Far Rockaway, he had been a familiar figure at the New York tracks, producing and selling "Herman's Pink Card" of daily selections, and coming out so fast after the closing race with a sheet boasting of his winning selections that he had become known as "Handpress Hermie." The draft had caught him, an event which he had been slow to forecast.

"Here's to the armisteous!" said the corporal, taking a drink before passing the bottle. "I had a hunch it was comin', but it broke no track records."

"To the armistice!" repeated the boys.

"Here's hopin' we can stand it!" added Oscar.

"Is the official board up yet?" asked Feinstein. "I hope nobody claims no foul."



"Sure it's official," they chorused, as if resenting the query.

"I still wish I could see the red board," said the corporal. "The whole outfit has gone off its nut. Can't youze guys stand a little good news?"

"It's too early to be sure," said Oscar.

"No shootin', no bombs, no nothin' for over two hours," complained Hollis, jumping up and pacing the yard. "The sudden quiet is terrible. They should stop a war gradual like, so a guy could taper off the explosions."

"It ain't too sudden for me," said Feinstein. "I can drop a war like that." He snapped his fingers. "I wish I'd of seen the armistice comin'. I could of got a bet down."

"That might have killed it," said Hollis, who knew something of the corporal's low average in picking winners.

"I'd of played it across," said Feinstein.

A mule came lazily into the barnyard at this point with the company cook on his back. The cook slid off. The mule proceeded over to Feinstein and stood regarding him intently.

"Don't look at me. I never seen you before in my life," barked Feinstein. "The Bowie track was off my route."

"Who's your friend?" asked Oscar Purkey.

"I'd of introduced you before this but I thought you and him was relatives," rejoined the corporal.

He made a pass at the mule with the bottle, and the animal jumped sideways and made off a few yards with what was amazing speed for a mule.

"He's better than rated, at that," mused Feinstein, critically.

The boys laughed.

"It's over. Nobody's fightin' nobody. The same roofs

is on houses that was on 'em this mornin'," continued Feinstein. "It don't seem offishul."

"Real or fake I'll take it," said the company cook. "When do we start for the transport home?"

"That's what I want to know," said Oscar.

"I hope there ain't no delay in them global startin' stalls," chirped Corporal Feinstein.

"It can't be too soon. I heard in a couple of months," said Oscar.

"You'll be using V-mail for another year. Getting into a war is easy. It's getting out that takes time and patience," put in Hollis. "They may use us to police Europe."

"Nuts to that global sheriff stuff! I just got into this man's war for the duration, not for no second feature," insisted Oscar.

"You'll be staying for the travelogues and the funnies," barked Hollis.

"Says you!"

"Ain't you heard about a cooling-off period?" asked Matt Hollis.

"I don't need no cooling off. I finished strong and wuz never extended," declared Feinstein.

"What's the cooling-off period?" asked the cook.

"All the biggies has been saying there has got to be a cooling-off period," said Oscar, beating Hollis to the explanation. "They say there's gotta be this kind of a period between the armistice and the peace so everybody can get cooled off."

"Hot or cold, I'm set to go home," declared Feinstein. "What the hell is the Army gonna be used for now, air conditioning?"

"Phooey on the cooling-off idea! Let's make the peace while we're hot," snapped Purkey.

"You said it! Sore as I am at the enemy, I could give him a better break next Tuesday than if I had to stick around this lousy country six months. Make me stay a year and I won't admit anything is too bad for him," argued Hollis.

"Me for New York and no unnecessary delay! I'm perishable fruit," said Feinstein.

"I'm afraid you can junk all that early-home stuff. An armistice don't end no war today any more than hiding the matches puts out a fire," sighed Hollis.

"Aw, there'll be no scratches this time," insisted Feinstein. "It's all talk. All the entries is fed up with war. They'll rush the peace treaty and set down anybody who wants to delay the start home."

"That's what you think. Things are in such a mess and so many countries is in the play that it will take months to identify the players. We may be over here so long we will master the native customs," sighed Oscar.

"Not all of 'em, I hope," remarked Hollis.

"What happens next?" asked Oscar seriously. "No kiddin'."

"What don't?" replied Hollis.

"We win, don't we?" demanded Corporal Feinstein. "And we don't get no breaks in the weights, neither. Let the stewards put the numbers up, ring the gong, and start payin' off at the mutuels. It wasn't even a photo finish."

"Just lay down the new rules, shoot the crummy bums who started the war, and leave us all go back where we come from and sleep in regular beds again," urged Oscar Purkey.

"You can make mine a double bed," added the company cook, "if they ain't rationing 'em back home."

"I got mine before rationing set in," laughed Oscar, "so I don't have to worry about that."

"It's twenty, eight, and four I won't be able to stand no bed, single or double, for years," put in Feinstein. "I been condishuned for sleepin' outdoors. I been bunkin' in puddles so long I got mudform."

"Now comes the committee meetings, the subcommittee huddles, the Big Fours, the Big Sixes, the voice hurling, the double talk, the sixty-four-dollar questions, and the assorted programs, in all flavors," moaned Hollis. "It'll get everybody sore all over again. I was in that last war and they kept me over here a year after it ended."

"That last one was a mere skirmish. A year won't be nothin'. It may take that long for the peace commissioners to get enough interpreters and check on the languages which is to be used," groaned Purkey.

"Not to mention dialects. It looks bad," asserted Hollis.

"Everything's gotta be settled once and for all in this heat; no disqualification, no false starts, nobody yellin' we wuz robbed," said Feinstein.

"Take it easy" cautioned Hollis. "We could all get shifted to the Pacific."

"Not me!" said Oscar. "What do they think I am, a travelogue with bunions and a bad haircut?"

"Scratch that Pacific stuff," said Feinstein. "I never could stand tropical islands. I freckle too easy."

"Don't be gooney! We just finished the war to end war," insisted Oscar.

"I heard that one before," said Hollis.

"This time you can get it in writin'," Oscar said.

"Wanna bet?" demanded Hollis.

"Gwan, ya big pestamist!" snapped Oscar.

### *Chapter III*

#### PRIVATE PURKEY AND HIS BUDDIES DISCUSS SOME IMMEDIATE YENS

PFC OSCAR PURKEY and Matthew Hollis were doing some fancy goldbricking on a KP detail two weeks after the armistice, annoyed that it did not entail a cessation of such menial duties.

"This is what hurts in Army life," complained Oscar. "You can't link up patriotism and combat with all this janitor service, kitchen canary, and chambermaid duty. They should not ask no soldiers to do this stuff. They should use conscienceless objectors."

"Well, we'll be all through with it some day," sighed Hollis.

"I wish I was sure," said Oscar. "This kitchen police stuff is nothin'. We may be policin' all of Europe any day now, like you been sayin'."

"Policing Europe may be a swell idea but I don't wanna be on the police force," said Feinstein.

"Me neither. My mother didn't raise her boy to be no global flatfoot," said Oscar. "When I signed up in this man's army it was to fight the enemy, not to be no watchman, cop, or complaint operator. I'm willin' to fight for Democracy, but not to drive a patrol wagon for it."

"I would certainly feel like hell walking a beat in Berlin with the war over for years," moaned Hollis. "Nuts to that world posse stuff! When they make Eisenhower a desk sergeant in Bremen, Mark Clark a police commissioner in Vienna, and Patton a gumshoe in Hamburg or Essen, I walk out!"

"You guys can certainly chew the fat," interjected Corporal Feinstein, showing some irritability. "Listen, we'll do what uncle says, and don't you kid yourselves."

"Let's hope for the breaks. We was gonna police Europe after the last war, but we didn't even stay long enough to lay out a beat," said Hollis.

"That's why they may go to the post with the idea this time," warned Feinstein.

"Do you think so, on the level?" asked Oscar.

"It looks like some of the entries has gotta stick around over here and keep the woist cases from jammin' up the field again. If everybody on our side just puts on the blinkers and leaves them gorillas on their own they will condishun some screwier paper hanger as chief hell raiser and he will bust loose all over again as soon as we all get back to the racing charts," said Feinstein.

"All you think about is gettin' back to them race charts," said Oscar.

"Sure," admitted Feinstein. "What do you wanna get back to most?"

"I was makin' out a list of things I wanna do first only last night," mused Oscar.

"Wanna know the first thing I'm gonna do when I get back to the States? Spend a whole day in a de luxe bathroom," said Hollis, with feeling.

The ambition drew unanimous indorsement.

"Yeah! One of them old rose and green tiled bathrooms with Hollywood plumbing, a faucet for every mood,

and a toilet that looks like a rajah's throne. I might take a turquoise and robin's-egg-blue color scheme in a pinch," Hollis went on.

"The color won't make no difference to me. All I want is modern plumbing and a wall at each end," sighed Oscar.

"I'm gonna hang around it just staring at it for a whole day," said Matt Hollis. "Maybe a week end. Yes, sir, the sight of an American bathroom will do something for me. I'm gonna take my hat off to a toilet and say, 'This was worth fighting for!'"

"Atta boy!" said Feinstein. "And give it a twenty-gun salute for me!"

Private Purkey reached into his pants pocket and pulled out a clipping.

"Your conversation reminds me of this," he said. "It's a page out of *Better Homes and Gardens*."

He unfolded it and held it up. It bore several snappy illustrations of bathrooms of the future, and Oscar read the captions:

" 'The business of bathing and grooming,' " he read, " 'so to speak, moves the contemporary architect to create postwar bathrooms which have slight resemblance to the prewar kind. The trend is to the luxurious yet simple.' "

The boys laughed.

" 'It is the harsh fate of most contemporary bathrooms,' " Purkey continued, " 'to be coldly unlovely, lacking that certain something which gives warmth and distinction to this part of the home. This one is in the house of Mrs. Conger Bird and is done in veined red marble. The room is enlivened with art objects from all parts of the world, some of them being collectors' items.' "

"Did you get that 'coldly unlovely' stuff?" asked Hollis.

"That's been the woist trouble over here. Me for that veined red marble and the art objects dead ahead," declared Feinstein. "Hot dawg!"

Oscar resumed reading: "'The walls of this bizarre bathroom which strike the note of the bathroom of tomorrow are finished with slabs of structural glass. The dressing table has a three-way mirror and frosted glass light panel set into the table for shadowless underlighting of the subject's face...'"

"Shadowless underlighting, that's what I need," declared Feinstein. "Yowzir!"

Oscar folded up the clipping and put it away as if he treasured it.

"It's no laughin' matter," he continued. "After all these months of washin' my mug in mud puddles, an indoor bathroom is gonna be a treat. Imagine not havin' to use all water twice, once for cookin' an' once for shavin'!"

"Know what I want all over th' joint when I get back home?" asked Handpress Hermie. "Gadgets, a million fancy knobs and handles, everywhere on everythin'."

"What for?" asked Hollis.

"Just for the pleasure of touchin' 'em without thinkin' maybe they're booby traps," explained Feinstein.

"You got everything thought out in detail, aincha?" observed Hollis.

"Sure he has. And me, too," put in Oscar. "I got my home-coming scenario all doped out and ready for action."

"Let's have it and see if we care," said Hollis.

"The minute I get off the boat I make for my little vine-covered cottage, with the white picket fence around it and the air lousy with the scent of magnolia and honeysuckles," began Purkey. "I wanna walk up the windin' path through them oleanders and get my first glimpse



again of that big ramblin' front porch with the big white pillars. I wanna pause and take a gander off through them white birches an' see the old stream where I used to fish."

"It could be them malaria spells comin' back, eh, Matt?" mused Feinstein.

"Just lissen to the punk beatin' his gums out," said Hollis.

"Quiet, please," said Oscar, resuming. "Then I want to see Old Joe and Mammy Lou, who've been in the Purkey household since slave days and, best of all, Mom and Pop and my bride and kid runnin' down the path to meet me. Oh, boy!"

"Hey, fella, I thought you lived in New York," said Feinstein.

"I do. Up around 132nd Street," admitted Oscar.

"That's damned near th' Empire City Track," said Feinstein. "I never seen white picket fences, magnolia trees, or windin' paths up that way. And what I smelt wasn't oleanders and honeysuckles. I never seen nuthin' like that vine-covered Manhattan cottage you describe, soldier."

"Neither did I before I got over here. I live in a flat, but what I've been through in this war has gave it a terrific build-up," explained Oscar. "It's gonna seem just like I'm tellin' you now, only I forgot to put in a old oaken bucket, a meadow full of sheeps and the big chestnut jumper that the Purkeys used to ride to hounds on."

"It must of been a swell picture—you and all the rest of the 132nd Street Purkeys chasin' the hounds to hell an' gone thru them subways," cracked Hollis.

"Am I borin' you meatheads?" asked Oscar.

"No more than usual," said Hollis. "Go on from there. You got as far as the old manse up in the cockroach belt."

"Well, I'll sweep that honey chile of the old South, Harriet Purkey, up in one arm and our kid up in the other and squeeze the livin' daylights out of 'em," mused Oscar. "It'll be outa this world!"

"You really got a wife and kid or is this more of that movie world stuff?" asked Feinstein.

"A kid I ain't seen yet, except by snapshot. About three years old. And you should see my Harriet. She makes all them Miss Americas look routine."

"Was there blackouts before you got drafted?" asked Hollis.

"No. Why?"

"That would explain a girl of that description marrying you."

"Shut up! You keep interrupting my home-coming," Oscar retorted. "Let's see. Then I'll go for my mom who'll have a couple of homemade apple pies in the oven and I'll wade into some flapjacks and sausages, beefsteak and onions! Chicken pie, country style, and Mom's extra-special custards. And chocolate layer cake with nuts. Boy, lots of nuts! I want a cup of coffee out of a cup that won't bounce if you drop it. What a treat that would be, fellas! What about you, Corporal?"

"Who, me?" replied Feinstein. "Foist, I just wanna park my fannie in a subway or maybe a Aqueduct train an' ride around for a coupla days. No place in particular at foist. Just gettin' a thrill outa sittin' still with nobody objectin'. Just goin' places without havin' to read no maps."

"That's it," said Oscar. "Imagine travelin' all you want without hearin' the word 'objective'!"

"Then," continued the corporal, "I wanna look up a coupla dames who I hope ain't broke down since I been away. I wanna lock myself in a room with a coupla hun-

dred *Racing Forms* and *New York Tellygraphs* and catch up on my back readin', Jimmy Byrnes permittin'."

"You're kiddin' yourself," said Oscar. "You'll go straight from the boat to Jamaica, Belmont, or whatever track ain't padlocked."

"Could be," nodded Feinstein. "It's been a long time between heats. But I should brush up on my dissa an' datta foist. I don't even know if Seabiscuit is still runnin'."

"I forgot one ambish," put in Oscar. "I wanna spend a week end landin' on beaches openly and not get shot at by nobody."

"It won't seem on the level if nobody blasts the hell outa you," said the corporal. "What's your big heartache, Hollis?"

"Who, me? Well, I'd kind of like to see Pocahontas agin," sighed Hollis.

"Don't tell me you're old enough to be carryin' on an affair with that Indian doll," exclaimed Purkey.

"It ain't a dame," said Hollis.

"It's a horse," snapped Feinstein. "I played it once at Tia Juana."

"This Pocahontas is a town, my old home town. Pocahontas, Iowa, out on Lizard Creek, Iowa. I know it's still there becuz I get postcards. I joined up in the First World War from there when I was seventeen. I said I was twenty."

"I thought I heard you once say Skokie, Illinois, was where you come from," said Oscar.

"I heard the meathead ravin' about Yuba City, California, once," insisted Feinstein.

"In a way I got lots of towns to get sentimental about," sighed Hollis. "I got gypsy in me. But Pocahontas is where I started."

"Look, Matt, you ain't ribbin' us on that last World War stuff, are you?" asked Oscar.

"I did better in that war than this. I was a sarge."

"How come you're a pfc in this one? With stripes and experience in the last one I'd think you'd be grabbed as a noncom. Do they know about it?" asked Feinstein.

"Sure they know it. Armies is like that. They let some jerk who couldn't read or write fill out my records and they got me and some other guy mixed up. Some twirp with my papers is probably a top sarge somewhere, and maybe dead someplace by now. And I'm a pfc on his papers, but still alive, anyhow."

"You break better than even," said Feinstein.

"Yea. That's how I figure it all out," admitted Matt.

## *Chapter IV*

### SOME CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN OSCAR AND HARRIET

THE TALK about home had made Private Purkey extra-homesick and that night found him getting off a letter to his wife:

DEAR HARRIET:

Well I gess you got the armistus news as quick as I did, and as crazy as the celebration must of been back home I bet you didn't see no goonier scenes than me. You would of thought there was nothing more to do except rush to the nearest gangplank. But all of us GI's has got our second breath now and we know we aint going to brake no speed records for east to west Atlantic crossings.

We are in the same position like a fire brigade that has put out a fire in the monkey house but got tangled among the hot trapezes.

Anyhow it is grate to have it over and know I will get back to you some day without no further objections from the Nazis. Believe me, Harriet, for a long time over here I was given the idea by them that I was positively the one American GI they had decided had got to be knocked out of the war and kept from ever seeing his wife and kid again.

You got no idea Harriet how it will seem for me to have a straw hat on again and dry drawers and no noise like a

suction pump coming out of my shoes every time I take a step and also to have somebody think it is something out of the ordinary when I got the big itch or neumonia or dysentery or a ear full of hot lava.

And also to have somebody ask me if my breakfast was O.K., could I use a comfortable chair, and would I please break the habit of sleeping after maybe 9 every morning.

Well, Harriet, just now all I want to do is get back home and take no orders from nobody but you and never feel no hate for nobody except somebody who tries to separate you and me and Bucky again.

What a kick it will be to get back into a double bed with springs and a decent mattress and the whole thing designed only for you and me, and with the war department without no control over it!

How is Bucky? I hope he knows me when I pull in and that he don't expect a different looking father. Maybe I should send him a snapshot of my top sarge who has one of the ugliest mugs in the Army and tell him it is me so he won't be disappointed with my looks.

I got lots of plans but one of the first things I want to do when I get home is to get on a Hudson River ferryboat with you so you can help me break myself of the habit of jumping off boats and wading ashore instead of waiting for them to dock. I been in so many beachhead invasions where I got off the boat and swum in from mid-ocean that it will take practice for me to get used to wharfs. Sometimes I was not sure if I was in the Army or the Navy on account of I was too wet to be a soldier and maybe too dry to be a sailor.

The guy that said only the Navy had to learn to swim was nuts, dear. The Army outswum it in this war.

Well get the old jalloppy all greased up so we can get a week-end trip to a beach and not get mistook for an enemy landing party and blitzed the hell out of there. Also get my suits pressed up and pick out the loudest shirts and neckties I got.

Gee, I feel like going AWOL and leaping on the first transport home. All I hope is that everything gets fixed up by them peace commissioners so wars don't break out every little while like Spanish influenza, roller skating derbies,



Sansone

"You got no idea, Harriet, how it will seem to me to have a straw hat on again and dry drawers."

and new forms of radio quiz programs. That is what counts with you and me and Bucky.

Tell Mom and Pop I am writing them and be sure to tell Mom to stop worrying about my feet getting wet. If she had of ever known how wet I was all over from start to finish in this global throat-slitting party she would of been over here giving the generals a piece of her mind.

Well, that will have to be all for now except to say I love you like a general loves a objective, but say, honey, don't start figuring out no secret defense weapon against me.

With more love than a sergeant has for his own voice,

OSCAR

Harriet was putting a letter into the mail in New York at the same hour:

MY DARLING:

It has been such a wild armistice celebration and there is so much confusion that maybe the letter carriers are still too much up in the air to bother with mail, but I am getting this off at once anyhow. If you only knew what the armistice whistles meant to me, dear. It's so wonderful. I never knew just how Mrs. Rip Van Winkle felt before but now I understand exactly.

Bucky is fine, but he had a close call last week. He climbed from a chair onto the kitchen sink and jumped off, holding just a diaper over his head. He had seen some of the older children playing parachute trooper.

The war has done awful things to kids. A man was found unconscious in front of Mrs. Gunch's house the other day. It was discovered that Mrs. Gunch's little boy, Augie, 4 years old, had dropped Mrs. Gunch's electric flatiron out of the second story window playing that it was a mystery weapon. Right now Bucky will swap all his toys for a commando knife. He recognizes no armistice and seems pretty resentful that such things are permitted to happen.

How I miss you! I have stopped going to the movies as I can't stand those close-up love scenes, and the radio is no help. The Number One song on this week's Hit Parade is



"When I'm In His Big Strong Arms." "When You Walk in a Room" is second. There ought to be a law.

The papers are full of conversion plans. Everybody is talking about them and from all the confusion you would think conversion was in some way linked up with boogie-woogie. I just want to convert from buses full of strangers to a flivver with only you, honey bunch.

It didn't take the home front long to begin launching postwar world wonders. Already an agent has tried to interest me in a heating plant that can be delivered by mail by a midget, takes up less room than a portable radio, and can be operated by dials. And I've received a folder from some company offering an amphibious sedan that can cook, do the dishes, mow the lawn, and never have to stop for bridges on the week-end trip to Staten Island.

Phooey on them! Nothing matters in my postwar world but you. I haven't had a hug in so long I could almost go into the black market for one. And don't think there isn't one.

Please make it snappy. Eisenhower doesn't need you as I do.

Oceans of high octane love,

HARRIET

P.S. I just went over all your suits. No moths got into them, but your spring overcoat looks as if it had been invaded by termites using blow-torches.

## *Chapter V*

### DAD AND MOM ARE HEARD FROM, TOO

DEAR SON:

You know what a bad letter writer your old man is, but your mother and Harriet have taken pretty good care of the correspondence and I figure you will make allowances for me. It is great to have the European war over and know you are out of danger. You did a good job and we are all proud of you.

They are making fair progress now in rebuilding the devastated portions of America, the parts damaged or destroyed in the wildest armistice celebration the world ever saw, but I don't think New York will ever be completely restored. It looked to me in the first four or five hours like everybody was trying to take home a piece of some building, taxicab, surface car, bus, or hotel as an armistice day souvenir. I like to think I am a brave man myself, but I got more scared in Times Square during the celebration than I ever got in the First World War. There was nothing to do but surrender unconditionally in the traffic jam and go along peacefully where the mob swept me. I was five hours making the trip from Times Square to the Father Duffy statue and then I found I had lost ground, as the crowd had moved the statue back almost to Penn Station.

How I got home I will never know, and what will always puzzle me is how I arrived there with somebody else's shirt and coat on and with a dancing slipper on one foot. I was pretty

well battered up but the bone-setter fixed me up in a few days, although I still ache here and there.

Its a different America already. Everybody is trying to go somewhere for fun in an automobile again and the traffic jam last Sunday was almost on prewar scale. The gas station man asks if you want him to fill her up and even offers to wipe the windshield. Five auto salesmen have called me up in the past week to see if I'm interested in a new type car that gives 50 miles to a gallon.

Things would seem pretty pleasant back home again if it wasn't for the speeches we have to listen to on the postwar world plans. Everybody is on the air in a debate on the subject. They are gumming up the issue instead of clarifying it.

Well, all we've got to do now is lick the Japs and put them back in the acrobatic acts where they were doing well and bothering nobody except the sea lions who were professionally jealous. It shouldn't take long.

I hope you get back soon and that it may be all over when you dock. As the only man in the house I have been catching all the hell and it will be nice to have you home to share the complaints.

Your mother is urging me to get in touch with Tammany Hall, Matt Malloy, our district leader, and a couple of Senators to write Eisenhower to release you at once so she will not be kept waiting, and I may have to do it just to please her.

She's fine and her prayers have kept you safe, my boy, never forget that. Sure I prayed for you, too, but no man's prayer gets as far as a woman's.

As always,  
DAD.

DEAR SONNY:

We're all writing you tonight. Harriet and your father seems to be having no trouble, but I can't put on paper all that is in my heart. Just not to be reading the newspaper casualty list every day, always afraid your name might be on it, is wonderful.

And when I see so many fine boys hobbling around, some of them terribly crippled, I think how good the Lord was to you all through the long war.

I was in church lighting a candle when the armistice news came. It must have been my ten thousandth candle. Then I heard the bells and whistles, and Father Malachi came out and told us what had happened. I just stayed there. It all seemed so restful and beautiful, like as if the world had come back to God all of a sudden, and you seemed so close to me.

Your dad says he is telling you all about the armistice celebration. He ought to know. From the way he looked when he got home he must have been one of the ringleaders.

I am feeling fine now and ever so happy. All Harriet, your father, and I want now is to hear the doorbell and know you are back with us.

Be careful not to catch cold. Now that the war is over it is so easy to get careless. I hope the Army now has time to give you the food you like best and is cooking it right. Is the coffee any better? If not tell the cook to put some eggshells in the coffee pot and let it stand a few minutes.

Oscar, dear, now that the fighting has stopped I hope those awful army barbers who have been cutting your hair can take a little more time. Those last snapshots of you made me want to cry. •

I think we can help get you home soon. Your father has always worked for nothing all day election day and he must have some good friends among the politicians.

I am too full of thanks to write much more and will write again tomorrow.

Be a good boy.

All my love,

MOTHER

## *Chapter VI*

### PEACE IS HELL! A TOKYO WEATHER FORECAST

"YOU KNOW what Sherman said about war?" asked Pfc Purkey, as he finished a job of running a hose from a balcony water barrel into a blitzed Rhineland château to provide an improvised shower for a group of brass hats who were determined to make up for all the bathing they had been deprived of during hostilities.

"Sure," nodded Matt Hollis.

"He shoulda said the same thing about peace," declared Purkey.

"Right. If peace ain't hell it's just around the corner two flights down. There are times when a good battle would seem a relief."

"I used to think dodgin' scrap iron was tough, but this armistice routine is killin' me."

"If I could bleed just from gettin' bored I'd be too far gone for plasma," agreed Hollis. "I could be sent back to the base hospital right now from armistice ack-ack."

"What's armistice ack-ack, Matt?"

"It's all them things a army thinks up for you to do when the fightin' ends. They had me puttin' back the side of a guy's house the other day. But when they found

out I was a carpenter they switched me to work as a mason fixin' a stone bridge."

"That's nothin'. In two days last week I dug up six unexploded shells, helped a farmer locate a stolen windmill, built a fence around a major's quarters, and worked three shifts on a garbage run. This afternoon me and six other unfortunate refugees from a square deal have a date to fill in a latrine and remodel the remains to look like the Hangin' Gardens of Babylonia."

"I was just checking up on the kind of work Uncle Sam thinks I do best," said Hollis. "I've hung doors on a town hall, cleared a couple of forests, overhauled a Ford, shingled a barroom roof, built two handball courts, and helped salvage some rusted tanks. I also installed a icebox, delivered flowers to a Kraut showgirl for the C.O., and dug bait for a lieutenant who wanted to fish in a canal. And all the time I've kept up my marksmanship practice and skill in the manual of arms. Peace, it's wonderful, if you can stand it."

"I got tops one morning," said Oscar. "A reformed MP made me play darts with him."

"Zeke Woolson swears he got a job minding a baby the other night," said Hollis. "He's got four citations."

"For minding babies?" asked Oscar.

"Naw. For performing feats of valor outside the necessary line of duty."

"Maybe that's why he was picked for the job."

"I know the skipper that gave him that detail. He's a honey. He had me drive his car one night and while I was sleeping in the jeep outside this place where he is calling he yells out the window for me to come in. It turns out he wants me to take the dame's poodle for a walk in the park."

"It sure is tough droppin' from a war for the dignity

of man way down to bein' a handy man around the premises. War was no picnic, but it gave a guy a feelin' of importance and big-time stuff, with now and then the idea he was Superman," said Purkey.

"You said it. This armistice routine brings us right back to the Joe Doakes level. My morale is shot to hell. I used to feel like maybe I was a hero but now I feel like I was just somebody who's got talent with a broom and shovel."

"The last few days I found myself wishin' the enemy would start shootin' at me again. Fightin' had its good points," insisted Oscar.

"We could be in the other half of this war. Over there in the Pacific," said Hollis.

"What makes you think that would be worse? It would at least hold our interest and be strictly military," replied Oscar.

"That Pacific rumpus won't last long," declared Hollis. "I just got the weather forecast."

"What's it say?" asked Oscar.

"Tokyo and vicinity: today hot; tomorrow hotter followed by hara-kiri."

"What's the matter with us, anyhow?" asked Oscar. "All we yelled about when the war was on was for somebody to ring down the curtain on it. All we wanted was an end of the fightin'. And ever since it ended we been squawkin' about the ordeals of a armistice."

"Nuts to a war to end wars, gimme the armistice to end armistices!" declared Matt.

## *Chapter VII*

### SOME CORRESPONDENCE REVEALING MUTUAL IMPATIENCE. THE SINATRA INFLUENCE. THE CHAPLAIN WALKS IN ON A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE PEACE

PFC PURKEY'S low state of mind over waking each morning to find he was still in Europe, with the armistice two months old, was putting him in a mood in which he was of no value to any army, even in time of peace. But a letter from Harriet could always make a new man of him and he was reading one now:

DEAR OSCAR:

I'm a patient wife, honey, but I want to get one thing clear. Did you join the AEF or the Foreign Legion? Here it is over two months since the armistice whistles and I'm still operating on a long-time-no-see basis.

Bucky will be old enough to replace you in the Army if you don't grab a transport home soon. He has made out a list of the souvenirs he wants you to bring home. Nothing much. Just a live camel, a Nazi tank, two ack-ack guns, a landing barge, and a few jeeps. It serves me right for telling him there was nothing his dad could not do.

I've got to have you home. The delay may not seem long to Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill, but it is no brief interlude to me. They've seen a lot more of you than I have.



Except for your absence there are many signs that the war is really over. No clerk has asked me, "Don't you know there's a war on?" for a month and last week I saw a sign in a store reading, "If you don't see what you want, ask for it."

Remember that phone call to a radio shop for a new tube just before you sailed? Well, the man arrived with it yesterday. Also the jeweler who has had my wrist watch since Pearl Harbor just told me he will have the broken crystal replaced by next Friday. The war was not a total loss!

Believe it or not, I have at last been able to buy some underwear for Bucky. All during the war the manufacturers have had the idea mothers wrapped their babies in old newspapers. In a way they were right, but I had trouble getting the right sized newspapers. The regular ones were too big and the tabloids too small.

The OPA is beginning to take the armistice seriously and a trip for food and drink is getting fairly pleasant once more. It seems strange but good to go into a butcher market and not get that good-heavens-she's-here-again look from Mr. Lutz. Bucky and I do our shopping together almost every day now and it is wonderful to just stalk boldly into the store and demand lamb chops or a good thick steak without worrying about the points or being told to go fight the OPA.

Your mother is a new woman too. Counting ration points had her in a bad way.

All of which is just wandering from the main theme, which is that the Army still has a priority over you. This has got to be corrected and I don't mean perhaps.

Write me a long letter and tell me all about the latest demobilization plans. You must get a clearer picture of the situation over there.

Remember how much I love you, darling. It's a real ordeal here without you and that Frankie Sinatra warbling "Embraceable You" doesn't make it any easier.

Kisses by the trillion.

HARRIET

DEAR HARRIET:

If it burns you up to think I am still over here you can imagine what it does to me. Believe me, Harriet, if wishes

was Army transports I would of been home and bored with civilyun life allready.

When they okayed me at that abduction center "for the duration" I thought it meant just for the duration of the war but I gess it meant the duration of the peace maybe.

Getting into a war is easy but getting out is a job for Houdini. I feel like I was a govermunt in exile, and so far as governing my own home is concerned I am.

I am glad you are getting out from under some of them annoyances of war time, but what you say about Frankie Sinatra don't make me any gladder that the radio repair man has at last got around with that new tube. No matter how weak Sinatra was coming through he was coming through too strong to suit me. Nuts to him. I seen a piece in a paper which said he was good for the morale of the women at home but that is all hamburger. When girls scream like that it is not from morale.

Forget him. Don't I go all through a war without having no pinup girl but you when most GI's is pinning up so many pictures of long legged cuties with no clothes on that when they get back home they won't think their own sweethearts and wives look good if they are going around with anything more on than sarrongs.

Gee, there is nothing to that idea you got that I get a better impression of what goes on in the demobilization plans over here than you do back home. They get clearer pictures in China than I do right here in Europe, Harriet.

Everything is rumors and scuttlebutt. The peace making is not going too good. We had global battles, global aims, and global ideas. Now we just got global suspicions of each other I gess. From some accounts of rows between the biggies of the different countries, even on our side, I gess they should have a fighter escort to get out of the peace conferences safe.

If they keep us over here until everything is all ironed out you will have a husband who will of become one of the oldest inhabitants of the old world.

Not that I want no quick hashed up peace. This time it has got to be right.

One rumor says England is in a deal with Russia to stop the U.S. Another says the U.S. is in a deal with England to

stop Russia. Another says Russia is out to stop England and the U.S. with anybody who wants to cut in on the deal. I hear rumors at dawn that a big part of the army is to be kept in Germany until the Germans become a peace loving race, which means at least a couple of hundred years and I know I can't last that long even with proper refrigeration.

At noon I hear a story my outfit is going to get sent to the Pacific and at night that I am going to help build airfields in China. All I know for sure is that I am becoming the best European tourist the Purkeys ever had and can now speak four or five languages. Before I came over here I could only murder one tongue.

Them old time wars when a soldier could serve out a whole enlistment on one language and never need no interpreters to find out how he was doing must of been swell.

I been studying up on that plan by which a soldier can get \$2000 from a bank when he gets home if he is a good risk and wants to go into business for himself or buy a farm or produce a show or something. It looks like a GI will have to sign so many papers he will be as good as under attachment from the time he gets the dough.

It would be nice to have my own gas station. I know it would be fine to have Bucky out on a farm but I couldn't stand no farm life. I seen so much open country and so many mountain passes, hills, hedgerows, rivers, lakes, brooks, and rural mudholes that I would not care if I never see no more except in the movies and on Christmas cards and them Currier and Hyde prints.

Well, Harriet, I will have to close this now but you can bet I want to get home quick, with no detours. It is tough not to have ever had a peek at Bucky who must think I am just a character in a book. Smother him and Mom with kisses, but keep the high test ones for yourself.

Oceans of love,

OSCAR

P.S. Larry Hafey of my outfit got invalided home some time ago. Nothing very serious. I told him to drop in and give you all the news but if he says anything about me winning \$400 in a crap game he is just kidding.

Pfc Purkey lost no time getting the letter in the mail and was holding the snapshots of Bucky at arm's length with unconcealed pride when a group that included Chaplain Bartholomew Tierney, Matt Hollis, and Hermie Feinstein came along.

Chaplain Tierney was one of the many shepherds who had made it a special point to be with the flock when it was in the greatest danger. His flock had not been lamblike. It carried all the lethal weapons and pulled no punches, but under him and his kind it had come to have a new appreciation of spiritual values.

Thirty-two, a six-footer, Irish to his toes, and a natural mixer, he had been confessor, guide, companion, and fellow-battler for the right in all the tough spots. He was a great one for dropping in on the boys.

"What do you think of him?" Oscar asked, displaying the snapshot.

"Who is the monkey, anyhow?" asked Hollis.

"That," said Oscar, "is the heir to the Purkey millions, real and personal, not to say imaginary."

"He looks like a nice kid at that," admitted Hollis. "He must take after his mother."

"No wisecracks, soldier. He's the spittin' image of his old man."

"That's his hard luck," grunted Matt.

"Look at that old personality smile. He's got everything," exclaimed Oscar, examining a second snapshot.

"That's no smile. He's just drooling," insisted Hollis. "I don't see how a guy has the nerve to become a father in a world like this. Just about the time a kid gets old enough to know what it's all about, and have a little fun, some new maniac with a funny mustache, bloodshot eyes, and a radio technique starts another world war. And the kid has to drop everything and join the hell squads."

"Go easy, Matt," urged the chaplain. "Have you no regard for a young father's peace of mind?"

"I was just expressing my surprise at any Joe that would have guts enough to start raising male small fry in these days of wars made with positively no waiting," said Hollis.

"I ain't worryin' about there ever bein' another war," insisted Oscar.

"Not much you ain't!" exclaimed Matt.

"After the way everybody took it on the chin in this one nobody will want no part of no more war for a thousand years," said Oscar. "Am I right, Father?"

"Make it one hundred and I'll know you may be in your right mind, soldier," smiled the padre.

"O.K., make it a hundred," said Oscar. "I just wanna feel sure that kid of mine will never have to mop up after his old man. I don't want him ever accusin' me of leavin' him with a mess of unfinished business."

"Don't get your mind too set on it," warned Hollis. "You never can tell."

"You're nuts," snapped Oscar.

"I'm nuts and I know it," said Matt. "You're nuts and you don't know it."

"Come, come, boys," cautioned the chaplain.

"Lissen, Father," pleaded Oscar, "how's it look to you? There ain't no chance this time of a peace that will unravel in the first stiff breeze, is there?"

"It's hard to see how the world can make the mistakes it made after the last war," said Father Tierney. "It doesn't make sense to believe it won't make a peace that will stick this time. But I've got my fingers crossed."

"What's got you worried?" asked Oscar.

"Everything depends on whether our side is really out to make a better world or just to cook the world's

first global omelet, using all kinds of eggs, including dodo, weasel, and crocodile," went on the chaplain.

"Ain't you read all them bright new world plans and specifications?" asked Oscar.

"I have and I know 'em by heart," said the padre. "Nice reading, too. But it isn't a matter of literature and correct punctuation. It's a matter of spinal column."

"What was they using for a backbone the last time?" asked Oscar.

"Something basically rubber," said the chaplain. "Once put to the test it had all the strength of a piece of rotten garden hose."

"Even a regular backbone won't do this time," said Hollis. "The situation calls for a super spine."

"Lofty plans, pretty words, and nice resolutions certainly won't do the job," mused the chaplain. "The world has been resolutioned blue in the face. Backbone, integrity, and top courage are needed. Nothing less will be enough."

"That's it," said Oscar. "The whole world is off of the baloney standard for keeps."

"If it ain't it is its own hard luck," declared Hollis.

"If the peacemakers realize the truth of what you just said about the baloney standard, Oscar, all may be well," agreed the chaplain.

"We gotta make 'em realize it," snapped Oscar.

"Who do you mean by 'we'?" asked Hollis.

"You and me and the chaplain and everybody else who's been over here duckin' death all these years," said Oscar. "We should horn in on the grand settlement."

"Don't be crazy. The peace is made by experts," scoffed Hollis.

"Experts made the last one," said Oscar. "That's enough to disqualify 'em. Let some amachures take a crack at it. They couldn't do no worse."

"Maybe you've got something there," smiled the chaplain.

"Sure I got sumpin," insisted Oscar. "Know the real trouble with them official peacemakers?"

"What?" asked the chaplain.

"There ain't none of 'em that ever swam a river under shellfire, spent two weeks adrift in a rubber boat, slept in a foxhole, or cooked a meal in his own hat," declared Private Purkey.

"That certainly limits their perspectives," agreed Chaplain Tierney.

"I would go even further," went on Oscar. "Nobody should be let on no peace commission who ain't ate a raw albatross, lived a month on Red Heart Kennel Rations, and got used to canned ham and eggs."

"Now you're shouting!" agreed Hollis.

"What've you got in mind?" asked the chaplain. "A seat at the peace table for the GI's?"

"Sure," replied Oscar. "Why not?"

"What would a GI do if he got a seat?" piped up Corporal Feinstein, who had joined the group. "Show me a GI with brains enough to qualify in them peace tangles."

"He don't need no brains," argued Oscar. "All he's gotta have is just what he's got—a good sense of smell."

"Smell?" repeated the chaplain.

"Yeah, a beezer that catches every odor of malarkey, tripe, and horsefeathers," said Oscar.

The chaplain chuckled.

"So he smells the malarkey. What does he do?" asked Feinstein.

"He blows the whistle on it," said Oscar.

"Nobody pays no attention to a GI's whistle," said Hollis.



**"Nobody should be a peace delergate who ain't never swum a river under fire, spent two weeks adrift in a rubber boat, ate a raw albatross, or cooked a meal in his own hat."**



"That's where you're wrong again," insisted Oscar. "If a GI got into a peace meetin', smelt something, and blew the whistle on it, it would be such a novelty the whole world would take notice."

"It's screwy," insisted Feinstein.

"Aren't you worried about the world of tomorrow, Feinstein?" asked the chaplain.

"Why should I get worried about the world of tomorrow?" replied the corporal from Far Rockaway. "I ain't even sure about the world of today."

"Doncha want the world to be run better?" demanded Oscar.

"I'll be lucky if I get home and find my own district run better," said Feinstein.

"The corporal is a skeptic," said Father Tierney. "Oscar has something."

"O.K. So when do we start for the peace tables?" jibed Feinstein.

"We don't have to get to no peace tables," said Oscar. "We can do it by kibitzing."

"How?"

"We get up a GI Blueprint for Peace," said Oscar. "Wouldn't that be O.K., Father?"

"Why not? Everybody else has," replied the chaplain.

"What I am gettin' at," continued Private Purkey, "is that we got a big stake in this peace. This time a GI has gotta get more from peace than a mushfull of ticker tape, a parade under a lot of victory arches behind a flock of girl drum majors, and maybe a theme song about brotherly love. Am I right?"

"You ain't too wrong," said Hollis.

"Look," said Feinstein. "What goes into this blue-

print you're talking about? Make like you was ready to go to the post with it."

"I ain't got it all doped out yet," admitted Purkey, "only in a general way like. The first thing to do in a blueprint is to put the blitz on double talk. Double talk sunk the last peace, double talk brought on the war, and double talk is the number one danger right now."

"Amen," said the chaplain.

"So first we flash the red light against double talk," went on Oscar, "and second we yell for some kind of a world organization with teeth in it."

"It better have barracuda teeth," said Feinstein.

"Barracuda uppers and shark teeth for lowers," suggested Chaplain Tierney. "Dental equipment of a very inferior quality was the trouble with the old League."

"It begins to make a little sense," admitted Feinstein. "What comes next?"

"Well, we could put in sumpin demandin' a international commission for the control of microphone orators with ideas for new world orders," suggested Oscar.

"Now you're putting the finger on something vital," asserted the chaplain.

"Sure. Take the mikes away from all them phonies and their screwy ideas would never get mentioned outside of the country weeklies," said Oscar. "Airway gasbags is another threat to world order. The only way to stop screwballs like Hitler and Mussolini from horsin' themselves into power every few years is to have a international law so nobody can get near a mike with ideas for a new system until he has passed a test."

"What kind of test?" asked Feinstein.

"Just a good stiff test to prove a guy ain't no mental case, that he's a decent human being, and that he's got

enough on the ball to entitle him to sound off," explained Oscar.

"There is no doubt that the mike is the most dangerous weapon ever put within the reach of man," said Chaplain Tierney approvingly. "Let a half-baked fanatic with wild eyes, halitosis, and a good studio voice climb into a mike and he gets an audience only the good Lord is entitled to reach."

"Where would the addled paper hanger have got if the first time he started pantin' into a mike somebody had of grabbed him by the fanny and tossed him where he would of had to get a audience the hard way?" demanded Purkey.

"The trouble is," put in Hollis, "that you can't always tell how screwy a guy is from his first few radio talks."

"That's just it," said Oscar. "You gotta bar 'em before they get to the mike. You gotta make 'em show papers."

"What kind of papers?" asked Hollis.

"License papers. You got to pass a test and get a license to drive a car, to hunt rabbits, or even go fishing, but a fugitive from a nut factory who has a tosspot scheme to take the world apart and put it together his own way can operate without even a letter from his alderman," said Oscar.

"I never heard it put better," laughed the chaplain. "Go on with the blueprint."

"I ain't got much further," said Oscar. "If the idea sounds good you can all lend me a hand. How's the whole thing strike you, Father?"

"If you'll pause for station identification maybe he will get a chance to tell you," suggested Hollis.

"Well," said the chaplain, "generally speaking, you've been talking sense. I've heard you boys bellyache

about lots of things less important. Your GI Peace Kibitzers Association looks all right. Suppose you go ahead with a blueprint, what do you do with it?"

"The peacemakers will tell him what he can do with it," scoffed Feinstein.

"Send it to *Yank* or *Stars and Stripes*, maybe," said Oscar, ignoring the corporal.

"They run funnies enough in them magazines," said Feinstein.

Private Purkey let the crack pass.

"What's delayin' the peace anyhow, Father?" he asked after a moment. "I thought the biggies had a complete program all mapped out in advance."

"You know what happens to the best-laid plans of mice and men," said the chaplain.

"Yeah," said Oscar, "and this is the sixty-four-dollar question: which is ahead so far, the mice or the men?"

"It looks like a tie," conceded the chaplain.

## *Chapter VIII*

### PFC PURKEY WRITES A LETTER TO HIS SON, WITH SOME RATHER AMAZING CONSEQUENCES

"WHAT'RE YOU DOING?" asked Matt Hollis one night some weeks later, as he got back to the weirdly battered farmhouse where his outfit was now billeted and found Pfc Purkey working under difficulties with a candle that should have been put out hours before.

"Battin' out a letter to my kid," said Oscar.

"I thought you told me he was only three years old," said Matt.

"He is," said Oscar. "He won't know what I'm talkin' about but I like the idea of openin' a correspondence with my own son. I was sittin' here looking at the kid's snapshots and it suddenly starts me thinkin'."

"Don't start thinkin', Oscar," warned Matt. "The minute you go in for that, you show it all over."

"If you ever tried usin' your head for anythin' except thoughts about dames you would go into a decline," countered Oscar. "If you had a wife and kid it might be different. I'm tellin' you this kid of mine makes me see things like I ain't never seen 'em before."

"Are you writin' him a letter or a book?"

"Take a gander at it and make up your own mind," suggested Oscar, handing him the epistle. Matt read:

DEAR BUCKY:

You can't read, so you won't know what I am talking about, excepting your mother gets it across to you somehow, but here goes, anyhow.

I guess it is not clear to you why your old man never shows up around the house. Even at your age there must of been plenty times when you wonder how come I am away over in another part of the world and have never walked the floor with you like most fathers. Well, Bucky, it is like this. There was a war. I would rather of skipped it and just stuck around to be with you and your mother but the war got too big to be handled with the men on hand, so they sent for me.

Now the fighting has stopped and I am caught in a armistus. A armistus is a eight-letter word meaning confusion. After a armistus comes peace. (I hope.)

Now it is this peace which worries your pop. I read everything the biggies said I been fighting for but it left me in the dark. I read and listened to all the President of our country said for three years about what I am fighting for but I still felt dizzy. I went all over what Churchill said I am fighting for and I am still mixed up.

It is funny, Bucky, but do you know who makes it all clear to me for the first time? You. No fooling. I was looking at the snapshots of you when all of a sudden you make it plainer to me than all them presidents and primed ministers, kings and assorted diplomats ever did. It was like you was talking to me. I am staring at your picture when it all comes out. All of a sudden I understand that the Atlantic Charter is O.K. but that you and me and your mother has got a 132nd Street and Hudson River charter to stick to. And I forget the Four Freedoms and concentrate on the Three Purkeys with special attention to you.

Then I see that I have been fighting all through this shindig to keep you from what I been through. To me it becomes all of a sudden a war to guarantee that Bucky Purkey will not wake up no morning fifteen or twenty years from now

and find he has got to learn to like pooch rations and spend the best years of his life dodging rockets.

It is funny how you make it all so clear to me just now. Unless the peace turns out to be for keeps the war will of turned out to be a joke and I will of been getting my noggin knocked off just for the fun of it. If you ever should have to do over the job for me it will be one hell of a note, if you will excuse my language.

I would feel like a awful heel. And you and your mother would say, "Gee, that man of ours must of been a big crumb."

So, like I am trying to say, suddenly I know what it is all about and I can't sleep nights thinking of how important it is to get a peace with no jokers in it. I don't like the way it looks now, Bucky. I got a sort of wacky feeling that a few suggestions to the peace experts from GI's like your pop might not be so bad. Whenever I think maybe this is a crackpot idea I take a look at your snapshot and it is like you was saying, "Go to it, Dad! It can't do the peace no harm and it might do it a little good maybe."

Anyhow you and your future is my Postwar Goal Number One, so if I am a little late getting home just remember there is still things to be done before I can wash up this war.

Your mom can make all this easier to understand. Anyhow I hope so. Look after her as she is the swellest mother a kid ever had and you are head man around the house now.

Thanks for all you been saying to me through them snapshots. I think I get you.

Your loving father

P.S. I will bring you home most of the souvenirs you want but it may be hard to get a live camel on account of your old man is in Germany, not Africa or Egypt, and all the camels the Krauts stole from them places was shot on the grounds they was not pure blonds.

"Oscar," commented Matt Hollis, "that's a good letter. I've come to the conclusion you ain't more than half crazy."

"That's better than average these days," snapped Private Purkey.

## *Chapter IX*

### AN INTERCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN OSCAR AND HARRIET. THE DEMOBILIZATION POINT SYSTEM. THE BROADWAY COLUMNS PROVE CONFUSING

DEAR ANGEL IN OVERSIZED SHOES:

That was a grand letter you wrote Bucky. I read it to him. Even if it was all Greek to him he clapped his hands approvingly. I am keeping it for him when he grows up. It conveyed plenty to me, too, dear. To me, too, Bucky puts things into focus when the big shots of the earth fail.

I can wade through a New York Times editorial, two White House speeches, a Sunday broadcast from Buckingham Palace, and the last analysis of the Dumbarton Oaks meeting and still not understand things the way I do when I look into Bucky's eyes.

If I thought he would ever have to go into a world war because this one wasn't settled right it would kill me. All the peace wrangling is too deep for me. But maybe it's just as well. If I understood what was being said it might worry me more than ever.

I just read another article explaining how soldiers are picked by a point system to be sent home. They get so many points for service, combat records, heroism, behavior, and for being married and having children. The ones with the most points will get sent home first, the story said.



This should mean you will be on the first boat. You have been in the war longer than anybody except Eisenhower and Halsey, you have certainly seen plenty of combat and there is no doubt you are a married man and a father, although I suppose, red tape being what it is, it may take a long time to prove it to the Army, even with Bucky as evidence.

We are all well. Last week we decided to get your old jallopy which you stuck into Henchy's garage when you were drafted. Oh, boy! The engine had rusted up, somebody stole three tires, the gas tank was porous, and there was a nest of mice in the rear seat. It had nothing left but pleasant memories.

I told Mr. Henchy he had promised to take care of the car until you got home. Know what he said? He said he had no idea you would be in Europe most of your life and *his*.

Please, please, get home to me somehow soon. I love you. But that isn't strange. The strange thing is that after all these years I can remember you.

Step on it, my darling.

All my love at accrued interest,

HARRIET

P.S. I have argued Bucky out of a live camel. He will settle for a kangaroo and an elephant. He thinks you are in the Pacific war part of each week.

Oscar replied:

DEAR HARRIET:

Gee, I am glad you and Bucky understand what I am talking about on account of half the time I ain't sure myself. But like I said in the letter to Bucky, the one thing I am sure of is that this war was fought to make the world safe for Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Purkey and their kid, and if I had my way I would mention them by name in the Atlantic Charter, the Yalta huddle, the California meeting and that Dumb Button Oaks thing.

Yes, honey, GI's is being sent home by a point system. Gee, I thought points was only used in America for rationing. Using them for demobilization makes me feel like a can of corn instead of a war hero.

But I am for the idea. My record should get me more points than OPA required for porterhouse steaks. I got bruises to show I was in more combats in this war than Sergeant York was in the last one. I got no bad conduct marks so far. The few times I run from shells it was on account of my top sergeant was setting the pace and a bunch of looeys was right on my tail yelling for me to make a opening for them to get through without reducing speed.

I got my share of Fritzies, I didn't cost the Army much for dental repairs, I ate the Army food without murdering no cooks, and I was always especial careful to keep my pants and coat buttoned at inspection, so I figure that all this gives me 75 points. Being married didn't get me no points in the draft but it should be good for say  $12\frac{1}{2}$  in the demobilization. Bucky should be good for the other  $12\frac{1}{2}$ . Which gives me 100 easy.

Thanks for them Broadway columns you sent me. They mix me up more than ever on chances of getting home. Winchell says my outfit will sail inside of two weeks. Louis Sobol says I will be over here another month. Ed Sullivan has a paragraph saying my bunch will be aboard ship in six weeks. Leonard Lyons is positive I won't see no New York skyline for two months easy.

Jimmy Fidler says I got home last week. He is the only columnist I can prove wrong.

I wish I knew how Elsa Maxwell and Dorothy Thompson got it doped out.

When it got around the area that I had all them Broadway columns there was a stampede by the commissioned officers to get them. They made me give them up on the ground a c.o. is as much entitled to find out when he is going home as a GI is.

All my love,

OSCAR

P.S. Me and some other Joes is getting up a few ideas for a peace that will have buttons on it instead of zippers. But the question is what to do with the ideas when I get them all drew up.

## *Chapter X*

### DISCORD IN THE DOVECOTES. THE HOME FRONT TURNS A LITTLE SOUR

THREE MONTHS had now elapsed since the armistice. And except for the lack of actual gunfire and bloodshed there seemed to be as much fighting going on between the nations as ever. A Hollywood movie czar had in fact put in a bid for pictures of the peace conference thinking he was bidding for fight pictures. Representatives of Russia, France, England, and the other nations on our side—brothers all—were standing toe to toe in many arenas, no punches barred, and not even bothering to go to a neutral corner after knockdowns.

There were rumors that Anthony Eden had come out of a council meeting with the "Shiner of the Year," that an American peace conferee had been seen rolling on the floor with a Russian brother, and that Big Three meetings were being opened with demonstrations in ju-jitsu. The spirit of mutual distrust was rampant. On one single morning the headlines included,

ROOSEVELT DENIES RIFT WITH STALIN

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CHURCHILL DENIES RIFT WITH ROOSEVELT

## STALIN DENIES RIFT WITH CHURCHILL

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### FRENCH DENY RIFTS

---

### RIFT DENIED BY POLES

---

### SENATE DENIES RIFT WITH ADMINISTRATION

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It was a rifted season indeed. In fact the rifts were twenty feet high in exposed sections.

The assorted peace committees and subcommittees were giving evidences of heading for the rocks and discord, and some of them were less inclined to try dynamite than to upholster the rocks for comfort. Tossing in the heavy seas of conflicting interests in small boats, they seemed at times bent on attempting to cure seasickness by resolution and plug up leaks by amendment.

There were, as usual, diplomats who, caught in a barrel far back from Niagara Falls, would still weaken in their regard for the barrel and want to make a deal with whirlpools.

They were good men, kindly and well meaning, in these postwar world huddles, but they were in one of the hot spots of history, and it made them jumpy.

All their fine pledges, all the nobly pitched promises about following a fixed star in the high spirit of the crusaders, were well remembered, but the forward march was beginning to seem across a greased floor against a head wind, with the fixed star looking a little like something hastily contrived by a circus property mistress with a hangover.

Many a stomach rumble in Washington, London, and Moscow was being mistaken for a statement of policy. Oratory was being widely accepted as the handmaiden of

deep thinking, and wild gestures as the mother of sober contemplation.

“Very true, but . . .”

“This is all very well; nevertheless . . .”

“I do not for one moment overlook the broader goals; however, we . . .”

“After all, there is a practical side to this problem. . . .”

“We must not waver in our pursuit of the high purposes to which we have set ourselves, yet it seems to me at this time . . .”

So rang the old familiar phrases through the committee rooms of Europe, with the peace sessions hardly warmed up to the real problems.

The papers of Europe were shot with headlines reflecting doubts, misgivings, rivalries, cross-purposes, and suspicions.

Back home the harsh voices of Congressmen, politicians, and open-forum ventriloquists merged into a gaseous symphony of disturbing comment. If all the cries of the hour could have been put through a wringer and squeezed of the language of diplomacy and tact the result would have been a strident chorus of “Foul!”, “Robber!” and “He’s gotta knife!”

Many a starry eye had already taken on a glazed look.

There had already been many moments when the old saying, “If you want a war, call a peace conference,” seemed to have more punch than ever.

In Europe the question whether or not there would be a “cooling-off” period continued to be problematical. But not so at home. Hardly had the armistice bells stopped ringing than the cooling off became apparent without the aid of thermometers. Now a few months later

the home-front idealism was suffering from frostbite. The pipes of global brotherhood were freezing fast.

George P. Spelvin, who had expressed such lofty concern for the future of Europe and Africa, was now concentrating on the more local problems of striking a cash balance, getting back to normal, brushing pinfeathers off his shoulders, and being careful about getting out on a limb.

There were plenty of moments when "Hooray for Warren Harding!" would have seemed in perfect timing, and when you could have been told, "The next voices you hear will be those of Woodrow Wilson and Henry Cabot Lodge," without questioning it for a split second.

One night Oscar tuned in on a short-wave broadcast of a meeting in Madison Square Garden, New York, and heard a Senator. The static was almost as bad as the speech, but Oscar caught fragments:

"And I say to you, my fellow countrymen, that America must not be permitted to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for Great Britain.... We were the victims of slick British diplomacy in the last war and it must not happen again....

"We must not repeal the Declaration of Independence.... Our beloved George Washington... no foreign entanglements... never surrender our sacred national sovereignty or sell our birthright... our forefathers who shed their blood at Lexington and Concord..."

Here, through some vagaries of reception, the voice of the Senator faded out to be supplanted by somebody who sounded like Gracie Fields trying out a pretty bad concert-hall ditty for distance, but presently the Senator managed to get through again:

"...I cannot warn you too solemnly against the dangers of joining in any postwar agency to preserve the

peace of Europe. . . . We must be masters of our fate and captains of our souls. Now one more word—and I am through. . . .”

“It must be a radio comedy act. ‘Duffy’s Tavern’ or something,” declared Oscar.

“Nobody talks like that any more,” said Feinstein.

“Sez you!” said Matt Hollis.

## *Chapter XI*

### THE OUTFIT GETS MORE COMPLETE DATA FROM THE GI BLUEPRINT

PFC OSCAR PURKEY had sounded off so often on the GI Blueprint that some of the boys were calling him "Blueprint Oscar." But there was no general disposition to deride him. There were few who were not with him in the firm belief that the men who had done the fighting should have a say in the settlement.

But there were many who felt the idea would never get anywhere, and that Oscar was just scuttlebutting. Matt Hollis, the old soldier, was with him warmly, if at times a little skeptically. Chaplain Tierney had by his sage observations put himself on Purkey's team, and there had been support from other quarters.

Tonight some of the Joes were sounding Oscar out, some just to heckle him, some with a real yen to get all the angles.

"Give out with this GI Blueprint thing," urged Sam Rogowski, a pfc from Bayonne, New Jersey. "The more I think of it the less of a gag it seems."

"It ain't no gag," snapped Oscar.

"In the rough it looks a little screwbally," insisted Rogowski.



"Lissen," said Oscar. "Screwballs brought on the longest war in world history. Maybe screwballs could bring on the longest peace."

"Are you levelin' with this or does it all come under the head of camp entertainment?" demanded Alf Simpson, a corporal from Lemon City, Florida.

"Sure I'm levelin'," said Oscar.

"Let's get the lowdown. What's it all about and if so why?" chirped a pfc from Wappingers Falls named Steve Walters.

"Look," began Oscar. "What's the first thing you meatheads wanna do? Get home, right?"

"Right, and in spades!" they chorused.

"What's holdin' us up? The peace meetin's," continued Purkey.

"And how!" shouted someone.

"Anything that helps speed up the peace helps to get us home, don't it?" Oscar went on. "And once we get home we wanna stay there. To have a chance of stayin' there we gotta be sure the peace is no wet wash."

"O.K., so what's the GI Blueprint do? Open up!" cried Pfc "Bugs" Garvey, of Clearwater, Texas.

"It's only in the egg just now," said Oscar.

"Let it die inside the shell," scoffed Corporal Feinstein, "and save yourself a fresh crop of wrinkles. Global worryin' don't pay."

"Go on, Oscar," piped up Matt Hollis. "Pay no attention to the Rockaway gloompuss. If it's screwy to think a soldier should take an interest in the peace, classify me as 1A among the screwballs."

"Who decides what goes into this blueprint?" asked Pfc Rogowski. "I'm all ears."

"You and me and all the others who've been takin'

all the punishment over here. All ideas is welcome. We just gotta come out for what we want," explained Oscar.

"What do we want? I'll bite," said a pfc named Emil Gonzales from Corona, Long Island.

"Anything that helps wipe war off the slate," said Oscar. "Anything that makes this a win for keeps, and no retakes. All the things we fought for."

"What did we fight for?" jibed Feinstein.

"Get this straight," said Oscar. "I was fightin' because my number came up in the fishbowl, because a dumb Army doctor said my sinus trouble was nuthin', because at the abduction center nuthin' happened to get me a discharge, and because once I got overseas I had one big red-hot yen—to get the goddammed thing over with, the quicker the better! I developed one helluva interest in the war, yeah, but nuthin' like the interest I got in the peace right now. With me it don't rate second."

"You're just giving yourself a workout with that thing called idealism," put in Feinstein.

"The hell I am!" snapped Purkey. "I don't swallow all that hogwash about gettin' a peace with no holes in it nowhere. I'm just sold on doin' anythin' possible to plug up the leaks. It all boils down to this: despite them Purple Hearts and all that, I been wet, dirty, tired, and scared to death for two years over here. I seen a lot of swell guys blasted to bits. Lots of times I thought I was dead and didn't even believe the contrary reports. So maybe I'm a little nuts over the chance my kid might have to go through the same thing."

"If you're getting signers, you got one," said Pfc Rogowski. "I got two kids. I should do 'em a dirty trick knockin' your idea! No dice, soldier, no dice!"

"Who the hell's knockin' the idea?" asked Feinstein. "The idea may be O.K., but what can we do with it? No-

body'll pay any attention to it. When the shootin' is over a soldier is just a chorus man during the rest of the performance."

"We could be chorus men that sing bass," said Matt Hollis.

"But what's a gripe ever get anybody?" asked Pfc Garvey.

"This ain't no gripe. We ain't just squawkin'," insisted Pfc Purkey. "We're lendin' a hand—we're just tryin' to help win a game with a few throws from the deep outfield."

"They got so many people workin' on peace blueprints that the whole thing is sufferin' from overcrowdin', bad air, and general confusion," insisted Feinstein.

"If we shoot straight, talk clear, and put everything on the line we can clear the air," said Oscar. "Cripes, them biggies makin' the peace look plenty worried. Maybe they would welcome some help from us!"

"Sure," said Matt Hollis. "It would be such a helluva novelty to see us GI's, after all these years of just doin' the dirty work, suddenly askin' for a little attention on the peace, that it might wow 'em."

"If we only got enough attention to show they recognized a GI was still in the setup it would be something," said Rogowski.

"You ain't wrong, soldier," said Hollis. "It sure would be nice to feel that the peacemakers remembered us."

"Let's run over it for bugs," suggested Harvey "Ham" Bradley, a pfc from Fresno, California. "You get a GI Blueprint all drawn up . . . suppose it makes sense and reads swell . . . it says what we'd all like to say . . . so what? What do you do to get it read by anybody that counts?"

"There's plenty ways," argued Purkey. "We could send it to the Big Three."

"Them biggies has mail openers," said Feinstein. "They go through the mail and strain out everything that ain't the McCoy."

"How about *Stars and Stripes*?" asked Purkey. "They would print it maybe and it would get copied in papers everywhere. Half a break in publicity would start the ball rollin'."

Chaplain Tierney was now discerned by Oscar on the edge of the group.

"Hey, Father!" called Oscar. "Take over from here! I got a feelin' I ain't gettin' no place fast."

The boys turned to the chaplain, seeming to second the motion.

"You're all right, Oscar," smiled Chaplain Tierney, "and you're holding your audience. All I can say is that I've heard all you boys bellyache over a great many things less vital than a good peace. This could be a bellyache that will count for something, although I wouldn't be positive."

"Would we be getting off side, Father?" asked Matt Hollis.

"How so? Who is supposed to make the peace? The representatives of the people," replied Chaplain Tierney. "And it seems to me that as representatives of the people, duly accredited and trusted, you fellows they picked to do the fighting for them are tops."

"Thanks for the assist, Father," grinned Oscar.

"My boy," returned the chaplain, "you are doing almost as much worrying about peace and a better world as Woodrow Wilson once did."

"Woodrow who?" asked Oscar.

"Wilson," said the chaplain.

"Who is he?" asked Oscar.

“Just a President of the United States,” put in Corporal Feinstein.

“Roosevelt is President of the United States,” said Oscar with finality.

“He wasn’t always,” said Feinstein.

“Aw, quit ribbin’ me,” said Oscar. “I ain’t ignorant enough to swallow that.”

## *Chapter XII*

### PURKEY AND HOLLIS TALK IT OVER, THE LATTER FEARING THE EX-FILLING-STATION ATTENDANT WORRIES TOO MUCH

"LISSEN," said Mat Hollis, alone with Pfc Purkey in barracks later on that night. "This whole thing is beginnin' to get you off center, ain't it? You better ease up."

"Could I be screwier for a better reason?" demanded Oscar.

"I don't know as you could," admitted Hollis, "and I am with you in a general way, but I don't wanna see you cuttin' out paper dolls."

"All I'm claimin' is that GI's should have a voice in the peace. Why can't they have?"

"You want reasons or just an openin' for fresh arguments?"

"I want reasons."

"The chief reason is customs and rules and regulations. You never heard in all history of any pfc's or corporals or sergeants at a peace table, did you?"

"Only in cases where they was doin' MP or fillin' inkwells or maybe emptyin' ash trays," admitted Oscar. "But why not? Why should nobody below generals and

admirals get to them sessions? Who's got a better right than GI's and noncoms?"

"Who's got a better right to help draw up new fire laws than the hoseman who carries the fat dame down the extension ladder?" replied Hollis shrugging his shoulders. "They just don't ask 'em for suggestions, that's all."

"Maybe its just on account of the firemen don't demand their rights," said Oscar.

"It ain't just a question of us havin' rights to be at a peace table, Oscar," said Hollis. "There's on old idea it takes education and background and other qualifications to horn in on them superdooper problems."

"What qualifications? A college diplomer, a few years in politics, a book on what's wrong with Europe and Asia, and a silk hat?" asked Oscar.

"Let's just stop at the silk hat. That's enough to let us out," said Hollis.

"An iron hat would be better millinery at them peace meetin's. It would help keep their minds on what it's all about. Like I said before, they had plenty of use for GI's in the war."

"Not for purposes of debate and suggestions," said Hollis. "All they wanted from us was socko."

"We'd put socko in the peace. We don't live in no ivory-head towers. We'd take our objectives."

"At least we would remember what they was," said Hollis.

"Right!"

"But you're gettin' too hot and bothered," insisted Hollis. "After all, the regular peace delegates is doin' O.K. What's your complaint?"

"It ain't so much what they're doin' as what I'm afraid they won't do," said Oscar. "There seems to be a

good deal of hedgin' and stallin' already. To make a peace that will stick they gotta be tough. They gotta feel the same about them Krauts that they felt when the fightin' was on. They gotta keep in mind the sufferin', the nightmares, and the goose-pimples. They gotta remember the muck, the blood, the cold, the booby traps, an' the mine fields. They can't be just guys who heard about such things at second hand."

"I'll give you no argument there," sighed Hollis.

"To hold out for all them goals, to stand out for everythin' that was fought for, there should be plenty of guys at them peace tables that can still hear the screams of some mangled buddies ringin' in their ears, and the gurglin' in the throat of some poor dogface who got his neck ripped open by a hunk of shrapnel . . . or maybe seen a field hospital full of wounded get blitzed to hell."

"Sure," said Hollis. "Them personal memories would be a big help every time a pussyfooter or a fixer got on his feet, but gee, what chance is there of anything like that?"

"Look, I'm goin' ahead with the blueprint idea," said Oscar, "even if they lock me up as a shell-shock case."

"More power to you," said Hollis, "and I'll chip in with a suggestion here and there myself."

"I need 'em," said Oscar. "All the fellers say it's a swell idea and they're all for it, but they don't come across much with bright ideas."

"They just don't know how to help," said Hollis.

"They better find out," said Oscar. "I can't be the brains of the whole Army, can I?"



## *Chapter XIII*

### A VISIT TO THE CHEZ INTERNATIONALE WITH SOMEWHAT ALARMING RESULTS

THREE WEEKS LATER the boys, supposedly en route to an embarkation point, found themselves and their outfit stymied on the outskirts of Paris. Bottleneck trouble, entirely of a transportation nature, was responsible, but the boys had been pushovers for scuttlebutt to the effect that the delay was due to complications in the peace, and trouble with the armistice, entailing a possibility they might be needed back in Germany again.

Purkey, Hollis, and Feinstein, at liberty in Paris on passes, headed for a visit to an "American Bar." American Bars, New York Bars, and Chicago Bars had sprung up everywhere under the mellowing influences of an armistice, but no soldier had as yet reported finding one that had anything beyond a sketchy idea of American drinks.

Matt had a nose for such places, born of his experience in the previous war. He had dug up a place called the Casa Times Square, a fairly complete old ruin, and had found that an order for a dry martini would produce a strawberry-colored concoction with foam on top. He had ceased experiments there and found The Yankee Grill,

where they made Manhattan cocktails with equal parts of red wine, seltzer, and cognac.

He no longer trusted to his own luck and yielded tonight to a suggestion of two other places. One boasted American bartenders. The other was the Chez Internationale which, according to reports, had a mixologist named Henri who specialized in Old Fashioned cocktails.

They decided no longer to have any truck with any bar in Europe called "American" and to try Chez Internationale.

The prospect of an Old Fashioned was out of this world, so they took a table, ordered a round, and awaited the worst. It was not long in coming.

"My God, what's he doing?" groaned Oscar a moment later as he weakened enough to turn and see the bartender at work with three bottles and a demijohn.

Hollis made a move as if to stop the proceedings when he detected the bartender putting in a thick green syrup, an olive, and something that looked like grenadine, topping the proceedings by ceremoniously adding three colored straws, in red, white, and blue. But he restrained himself.

"Sorry. No eggs," said Henri, as he put the drinks on the table. "I used the last egg for a whisky sour."

Eggs! This should have been enough, but war breeds the stuff of which heroes are made and the boys decided not to be quitters.

The funny thing was that it tasted good. This was disturbing and merited an inquiry. To their surprise they found that out of one of the bottles used by Henri had come some fair American rye. This, added to the fact that they found themselves still right side up, prompted them to order another round, specifying certain eliminations, specifically the straws.

"How's the blueprint for peace comin' along?" asked Feinstein.

"Swell, even if you guys didn't break your backs helpin' me out," said Oscar. "Plenty of others came across with stuff. I even got some hot ideas from a bunch of Wacs, some nurses, and Bob Hope."

"Let's take a gander at it," said Feinstein.

"Not yet. I gotta find somebody who can punctuate and spell better. I'm having trouble with commas and semi-colons."

"To hell with them! Keep it amateur," put in Matt Hollis. "That's the trouble with them pro peacemakers; they get in too many commas and things. They even use asterisks and footnotes."

"If you fellers really wanna make saps of yourselves, why don't you do it in person?" asked Handpress Hermie Feinstein, putting a newspaper on the table. "Do your bitchin' direct from producer to consumer."

"What's the angle this time?" asked Oscar.

"Take a peek at this," said Feinstein, pointing to an English edition of a Paris newspaper which bore the headline:

PEACE MEETING HERE

They read the story. It announced a session of a sub-committee, the Commission of Special Inquiries into Breaches of Laws and Customs, that night at the Petite Salle de la Paix.

"Right under your schnozzles," chuckled Feinstein. "You meatheads have been itchin' for action. Here's the big chance."

"Make like you was talkin' clear," urged Purkey.

"Crash the meetin'," said Feinstein, "and unload your peace ideas."

"It would be like crashin' a house party given by the Military Police," said Hollis.

"Only tougher," added Oscar.

"You've crashed worser places, ain't you?" asked Feinstein.

"Yeah," agreed Purkey. "If we got that kind of a objective in war we would of called it soft. But suppose we get into this meetin', what happens next?"

"You get thrun out," said Feinstein, "but maybe not before you get some of them views about the bright new world off of your chests."

"Hey, do you think there's any chance we'd get anyplace with this?" demanded Purkey.

"No," admitted Feinstein, "but it would be a quick cure for what's eatin' you. You'd find out how little them biggies care what a GI thinks about peace."

"This committee that meets here tonight is a minor league outfit," said Hollis, who had been reading the newspaper.

"He wants the Big Three," scoffed Feinstein.

"We can't be too fussy," said Oscar. "This may be the nearest we'll ever get to any kind of a peacemaking bunch, big, small, or medium. I kind of like the idea. Let's follow through. I always wanted to see a batch of peace delegates in operation. It would be educational even if we don't do nuthin' but sit it out."

"There's no percentage in sittin' it out," argued Hollis. "If we get in we should give 'em some lip. Them peacemakers wouldn't refuse to give a soldier a break."

"Like hell they wouldn't," said Feinstein. "Lissen, forget it! I was just testin' your sanity anyhow."

"O.K., you found me nuts," declared Oscar. "I'm for crashin' the huddle. How about you, Matt?"

"Put me down as a mental case, too," said Hollis.

"We been beefin' about a voice in peace long enough. Why not get some action?"

"What about you, Feinstein, are you game?" asked Oscar.

"Game, but not screwy," said the corporal.

"Come on, Matt! Let's go down and case the joint anyhow. The Rockaway corporal is lookin' for a runout powder," urged Oscar.

"Let's go," said Matt.

"What's so much tougher about a peace meetin' than the Siegfried Line or them Channel beaches?" asked Oscar.

"You'll find out," said Feinstein.

"You can never tell till you try," replied Oscar. "We can do some eyeballin' around first. The meetin' opens at eight-thirty. It's only five after six."

"Should we have another shot of ulcer alcohol?" asked Matt.

"Why not?" asked Oscar. "We're gonna get pretty far from the base of supplies."

They went to the bar for it.

"Well, here we go," said Purkey after the drink. "Take care of yourself, Feinstein, and if we don't show up again tell 'em where the bodies can be found."

"Aw, hell, I'm goin' along with you," declared Feinstein.

"You mean it!" exclaimed Oscar.

"You got me nuts just lissenin' to you," said Feinstein. "You gotta be crazy to get in on this, aincha?"

"No, but it helps," admitted Hollis.

"I'm beginnin' to think it's fun to be screwy," said Feinstein. "Enter me in this lunacy sweepstakes as a added starter. But gimme a apprentice allowance, understand?"

"Attaboy, Hermiel!" exclaimed Oscar. "I always knew you had it in ya."

"Yeah. And I was always afraid it would come out," Feinstein replied.

"Let's go!" said Oscar, linking his arm with Matt's. Handpress Hermie followed.

"Boyl!" he said. "What American cocktails at these Old World scrofula grills can do to a guy's judgment!"

## *Chapter XIV*

### CRASHING A PEACE PARLEY

THE BOYS WERE not drunk. But they were "steamed up." By the time they reached the building, the evening air had sharpened their wits to the fact that clearheaded tactics and luck would be required to crash the session.

They reconnoitered to study the situation. The main entrance was heavily guarded. A truck drew up and two soldiers hopped off the seat, went to the rear, took out a desk, and carried it into the building.

"There's another desk in the truck," observed Oscar. "Let's grab it and follow those guys."

They moved closer to the truck.

"Three men with that one desk would look phony," Hollis said.

"Anyhow, why should the three of us risk spillin' the beans?" demanded Oscar. "Hollis, you take hold of one end and I'll take the other. If we get in, O.K. If we get the heave-ho it leaves Feinstein out here to catch us."

"I should of brought a net," said Feinstein.

Oscar and Matt carried in the desk. Hermie waited and presently the two truckmen came out and looked for the desk.

"Hey, bud, did you notice anybody around this truck?" asked one of the men.

"Yeah. They took a desk out," said Feinstein.

"Who took a desk out?" demanded the pair. "What goes on here?"

"I don't know," said Feinstein calmly. "I just saw a brass hat come out with a couple of GI's and order them to take it inside. He seemed in a hell of a hurry for a desk."

"A brass hat, eh!" exclaimed one of them.

"I guess maybe that makes it all right, then," said the other.

"Sure. He must of ordered it," concluded his companion. "O.K. by me. One thing I never hope to do is to work fast enough to suit a brass hat."

They climbed back onto the truck and were off.

Feinstein worked around to a side entrance. There appeared to be only one man at the door. He wore a uniform but it was not a military one and he seemed to be on the slow side. Feinstein decided to gamble. He would enter with all the self-assurance at his command, returning any greeting smartly and brushing by with gusto.

It was easier than he had expected. The guard mistook assurance for authority, and getting nothing but a smile and a nod, as he stammered a clumsy challenge, he grinned back at Handpress Hermie and returned to lighting a cheroot in the drafty doorway.

Feinstein was now in a huge corridor which he proceeded to circle twice in military fashion to get his bearings. He saw no signs of Oscar or Matt. A pfc came out of a doorway, carrying a chair under one arm and tugging at another. The corporal sensed that there was an opportunity here.



"I'll take that one," he said with aplomb. "You go ahead. No use making a pack mule of yourself."

The pfc, who had already lugged in a half-dozen chairs to the assembly hall, was not adverse to a little assistance.

"O.K., corporal," he said, "but I can handle 'em!"

"They're in a hurry for them," snapped Feinstein. "Go ahead!"

"O.K.," repeated the pfc as he marched down the corridor. Feinstein was only guessing that the chairs were for the main hall. As the pfc led the way he followed and found he had guessed right.

He took in the picture at a glance. It was a huge assembly hall buzzing with action. Instead of a few notables and secretaries as he had expected, there appeared to be around a hundred people present, exclusive of a swarm of servicemen, hurriedly drafted for odd jobs.

He abandoned the chair he was toting and decided not to follow his friend, who proceeded on with the other chair. His main desire was to spot Purkey and Hollis. Trying to appear confident, and yet not conspicuous, he edged along the west wall of the room and found Hollis busily engaged in inserting sheets of carbon between sheets of typewriting paper. Hollis saw him at about the same time and grinned.

"What's the idea? What're you doing?" whispered Feinstein.

"I dunno. A looey grabbed me, rushed me to this pile of stationery, and told me to keep stickin' in carbon sheets."

"Where's Oscar?"

"You'll never guess," said Hollis. "He's lookin' for ice."

"Are you kiddin'?" asked Feinstein.

"On the level. They're so short of help around here that they can use anybody. The same looey that put me on this detail pointed a water cooler out to Oscar—that one over there under the flags—and ordered him to get ice for it."

"I hope he gets it," sighed Feinstein. "It's quite a trick in this country."

"It's lend-lease ice," said Hollis.

"I'm gonna browse around and see if I can locate him," said Feinstein.

"The whole thing is too soft," whispered Hollis. "I've had more trouble gettin' into my own home lots of times."

Feinstein looked across the hall now and saw Purkey moving with unusual speed and bent over as if he had cramps. The corporal hustled over and smiled as he saw the reason for the speed and the posture. Oscar was carrying a cake of dripping ice.

"How'm I doin'?" asked Purkey.

"I don't know enough about the ice business to be sure," said Feinstein.

"Where the hell is that cooler, anyhow?" asked Oscar, who seemed pretty confused.

"That's your problem," said Feinstein. "Say, how did you know where to get ice?"

"I didn't. I just took it out of another water cooler. Would you mind holding it for me a minute?"

"No, I know that gag," said Feinstein. "I seen it in *Hellzapoppin*."

Presently Oscar saw the looey wigwagging him and indicating where the ice was to go.

He hurried over and dumped it into the cooler.

"I'll get some paper cups," he said to the looey, hoping there would be no objection. There was none. Oscar

rejoined Feinstein. Together they gave the assemblage a more careful once-over. Any idea that the meeting would be a clubby little affair was jolted at once. The room was jammed with delegates, deputy delegates, members of their secretariats, stenographers, interpreters, etc. Members of the big GI detail, excused from further work, were now being hustled from the assembly hall.

Things had quieted down and it was apparent that the meeting was about to open. Dignity, restraint, and decorum began to manifest themselves.

"Swell chance we got of bein' let stick around," exclaimed Oscar.

"It looks bad," admitted Feinstein.

"We should of stood in bed," whispered Oscar. "Say, do you think by any chance we are a little boiled?"

"Let's say, 'mildly potted,' " corrected Feinstein.

"Hey, did you ever see so many sergeants and MP's in one building?" asked Hollis.

"And such big ones!" said Oscar.

"They look like professional wrestlers," said Hollis.

Hollis's eye was on a huge oil portrait on the wall.

"That bird has a roving eye. He keeps following me wherever I go," he complained. "Who is it?"

"As long as it ain't Eisenhower you should worry," said Handpress Hermie.

"Our only chance is in that balcony," whispered Hollis, pointing to a small one on the left, not much larger than a theater box. "Do you feel like goin' ahead? We can still call it all off."

"Hell!" said Oscar. "What's so tough about it? I don't see no tanks around. And there ain't no booby traps to watch out for."

Oscar led the way upstairs and into the box, getting another break in finding no guard there.

"All I hope is that we're carrying out a mission and not just reviving old-time vaudeville," said Feinstein.

"You worry too much," said Oscar.

The meeting was called to order. A hush fell on the hall.

Then it happened.

Hollis burped.

This was one of the oldest buildings in the city, but it was now discovered for the first time in its history that its acoustics were phenomenally effective with a balcony burp.

For a moment the delegates were merely amazed. Several eyed one another accusingly.

Had Matt Hollis been a single-barrel burper the incident might have remained a mystery. But he was the double-action type.

And as he repeated the gaseous alert all eyes turned this time to the balcony.

Private Purkey let his emotions give way in a sudden "Cripes!" and the exclamation, too, due to the regional acoustics, sounded as if broadcast via a special amplifier in a hollow train shed.

"That does it!" exclaimed Feinstein. "We're caught in the startin' gate."

"Who's in that balcony?" demanded the chairman of the meeting.

"You tell him, Oscar," whispered Matt Hollis.

"I was never no good on my feet," replied Oscar. "Can you talk, Feinstein?"

"Not fast enough to get out of this," said Hermie.

"What's going on up there? Who are you men?" demanded the chairman.

"It's a quiz program," whispered Feinstein. "And here's our chance to go for the jackpot."

"Who's up there?" repeated the chairman.

"Three GI's, sir," stammered Oscar Purkey, finally getting to his feet, but his Adam's apple let him get no further for the moment.

"What are you doing there?" asked the chairman.

"We're friends of the postwar world," said Feinstein.

"I don't quite follow you," said the chairman.

"Look, gentlemen," put in Oscar, "maybe we're off side, but we just came here to get the feel of a peace meeting. We're a little interested in peace ourselves."

"This is not an open meeting," declared the chairman.

"Ain't even a soldier welcome?" asked Hollis.

Cries of "Fantastic!", "This is incredible," and "Put them out!" came from the delegates.

"I should of stuck to beer," lamented Feinstein to himself.

The boys were lucky to get this far. Army officers in charge of policing the meeting had dispatched MP's upstairs to get the trio.

It was the sight of the approaching MP's that made the crashers see red. Purkey blew up completely and demanded in a loud voice, "What's so private and exclusive about peace? It wasn't a very private war."

"Take it easy," cautioned Hollis.

"If we are out of bounds here, say so. Why act as if we was Public Enemies One, Two, and Three?" went on Oscar. "We're scared as hell about the bright new world. It keeps us awake nights. We even think it's legal to worry."

"Peace is a fightin' word, I guess," piped Matt Hollis, who had gotten his carburetion under control. "It looks like it could get a soldier in serious trouble."

The MP's closed on the trio now, and the excitement was suddenly heightened by some loud voices at the main doorway into the hall, followed by the dramatic entrance of Chaplain Bart Tierney, whose success in getting through was due partly to Irish determination and strength and partly to the fact that of the five guards in the corridor whom he had to pass, three were named Driscoll, Finnerty, and O'Toole. He had been tipped off to the visit by a GI who had overheard the trio in the barroom.

The chaplain's eye caught the melee in the balcony.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I know these boys. I'll vouch for them. I don't know what's gone on, but they're O.K."

"They shouldn't have come here this way, Chaplain," said the chairman.

"Oh, I know it's against the rules and all that," said the chaplain, a little excited now. "But they meant well. They've been through the hell of this war and they've got things in their hearts that they want to express."

"It's presumptuous for three men to come here like this," suggested a delegate.

"Only three men!" said Chaplain Tierney. "Is that all you see? Maybe my eyes are a little better, gentlemen, but I see more than three... I see thousands, yes, tens of thousands.... Some from as far away as Iwo Jima, the China coast and Kwajalein!"

"We can take care of ourselves, Father," shouted Purkey. "I used to think so," said the chaplain, "but you're making me have my doubts."

The major who had directed the MP's took the chaplain's arm and tried to explain.

"They knew better than to bust in here," he said. "I don't get the whole picture, but it's queer business."

"Queer business!" repeated the chaplain. "Queer

business for a soldier to get so concerned over a better world that he forgets to do everything according to the book of etiquette! Well, it all depends on the point of view. I still say I vouch for these men and assume full responsibility for them. And incidentally, I'll be glad to give them a little advice on not letting the heart rule the head especially in the dangerous times of—er—peace."

Now the MP's, on orders from the major, took the regulation heave-ho grips on the trio and were rushing them out with speed and firmness.

Oscar alone put up a battle.

"This is what the Krauts used to call a counterattack with pursuit," he snapped.

"Take it easy," cautioned the MP who had a judo hold on his arm. "Nobody's roughin' you."

"Naw," leered Feinstein, whose resentment was also running high. "Nothin's happenin' to us. It's just one of them retreats according to plan. We're just shortenin' our lines!"

Something like order was being restored now as the MP's hustled the peace-conference crashers through the nearest exit. But nobody knew just what to make of the interlude. The main concern seemed to be over how the boys had managed to get in, and furthermore to stay in, and there was much embarrassment among officers charged with guarding the conferees, as they proceeded to check.

The newspaper correspondents outside in the corridors had heard the uproar. They knew that they had a story. No sooner were Purkey, Feinstein, and Hollis in the corridor than they surrounded them. The MP's, finding themselves and their prisoners outnumbered, were temporarily stymied.

"How far did you go in there?" Chaplain Tierney was asking. "Did you give 'em the blueprint?"



"Peace is a fightin' word, I guess. Once an MP always an MP!"



"Blueprint!" repeated a correspondent. "What was that? What about a blueprint?"

"We didn't do anything with it, Father," said Purkey, ignoring the newspapermen.

"That's good," said the chaplain, considering this all for the best.

"That's bad!" corrected Handpress Hermie. "Boy, if we'd only brung a copy!"

"We did," said Oscar, a new look in his eyes.

"Slip 'it to 'em!" said Feinstein.

"It ain't in the best shape. But my spellin's better."

"It's in English, ain't it?"

"Almost. I got some help from a Wac who used to be a stenographer. They spell good sometimes."

"Well, let 'em have it," urged Feinstein, "like uncle says."

"Now, now, hold everything!" warned Chaplain Tierney. "It'll just get you a lot of extra publicity."

"That's what we need now," argued Hermie. "This blueprint could make us look less like a bunch of crackpots puttin' over a freshman initiation."

The newspapermen were now clamoring for it.

"O.K.," said Oscar, "here it is! It's just a GI Blueprint for Peace we got up, that's all. If we hadn't got tossed out so quick maybe we would of handed it in."

"Now you've done it," said the chaplain. "You're in for trouble."

"Whaddaya mean 'trouble,' Padre?" demanded Feinstein.

The major appeared to give orders and the MP's resumed the march.

"You're not locking them up!" exclaimed the chaplain.

"Orders is orders!" said the MP.

"Once an MP always an MP," scoffed Oscar Purkey.

"Yeah, and it looks like we was gonna have more work in peace than we had in the whole war," replied the MP.

Chaplain Tierney had rushed back to the point where the correspondents were huddled over the GI Blueprint.

"Now, boys," he pleaded. "Be fair! Don't make a mountain out of a molehill."

"Molehill, my eye!" exclaimed an Associated Press correspondent voicing the unanimous opinion. "This is the best yarn to come out of a peace meeting so far!"

They didn't know it, but that was a masterpiece of understatement.

## *Chapter XV*

### THE GI BLUEPRINT FOR PEACE

THE BLUEPRINT as drawn up by Pfc Purkey with assists from many quarters, and with more horse sense in it than realized, was as follows:

To the Peacemakers:

This is a Blueprint for Peace which me and some of my buddies made up out of our own heads on account of we think if we have not got no right to have views on a peace who has?

Me and the boys know there is so many blueprints in circulation that they are as much in demand as longer commercials on radio programs but we got a conviction the world is in a more dangerous spot right now than it was at any time when the fighting was going on and that a GI has got such a big stake in what comes next he would be a heel if he did not have guts enough to speak up and make a few suggestions straight from the horse's mouth.

We even go so far as to think a GI should have a place at the peace table, but if there is not no chance of that (on account of he talks too straight) he should anyhow have the right to do a little kibitzing on the side lines.

The GI is plenty worried.

He is afraid the war aims is in danger from low visibility, leaks in noble hopes, confusion in objectives, backsliding, and signs of a heavy frost on high ideals.

A GI gets the creeps at the thought of a old style peace made from the 1919 pattern and enforced no better than No Smoking signs in subways and nothing gives him the heebie-jeebies like the chance another peace will turn out to be just a rest period in a slaughter house.

We got the idea the soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen, engineers, ground crews, medics, Wacs, Waves, and everybody else in the war was never so scared of anything at the front as they are scared that the job they have tried to do will have to be done over.

We think the hundreds of thousands of men and women that died in this global fracas was the type that never went back on a pledge, ran out on a duty, or scuttled a mission, and that they would settle for nothing less from the peacemakers.

We got a notion that straight talk is the need of the hour and that what we have been through makes us specialists in it.

The GI is plenty stuck by the peace problems and he don't pretend to have a deep grasp of all the facts or know all the answers but he would be dumb if he did not realize that he has got too much at stake to trust to luck, old routines, and past performances.

Me and my buddies has done a lot of talking with others and found they all think the same way which is that the job of making a bright new world is not going to get nowhere without the following specifications:

1. The abolition of baloney, bunk, goose grease, applesauce, and what is commonly called "the old malarkey" from all deliberations.

2. No double talk. (This means positively.)

3. Night and day illumination of the goal posts. (And no dimming of the lights to secretly move the posts.)

4. Strict adherence to the postwar goals as expressed by our leaders when men was dying for them. (And no stalling!)

5. No support of plans so snafu and dizzy they commit the world to another blind date with destiny.

6. A realization of the fact this world cannot exist half man and half rat. (Even a five percent rat quota is too high.)

7. A global study of rat control in the clear understanding that rats can't be fought by resolutions or amendments.

8. The same courage by peacemakers that was expected of men in the fighting planes, mountain passes, jungles, trenches, and foxholes, and on all the oceans of the world.

9. Down the drain with every impulse to pussyfoot, hedge, dodge, straddle, or pull a fast one.

10. The blitzing of any disposition to gamble the future of the world on a policy of expediency. No walking in our prewar sleep . . . and no sleeping on our postwar walks.

11. The creation of some organization to safeguard the peace by armed co-operation against international cut-

throats. You can't keep out of no free-for-all brawl by pulling down the shades and humming "Hearts and Flowers."

12. The constant realization that such a organization must come in on a backbone and a wallop and not on a paper wing and a prayer. One more Geneva rabbit rhumba will make the alert signal the main dependence of civilized man.

13. An approach to all problems in the spirit of King David and never in the spirit of Mickey Mouse.

14. The creation of a League of Nations that never mistakes a double chin for muscle and don't think a backbone is something to be shown only by strip-teasers.

15. A pledge by the four great powers to cement relations (but never confuse cement with bubble gum) and to stay in the line-up to the finish no matter who comes to bat.

16. A recommendation that the slogan of the next league for the maintenance of peace be, "Always beat a gangster to the draw!"

17. No determination to force the American, British, or Russian way of life on anybody else. (A way of life is not no nightshirt or no derby hat. A realization of the fact that any people's way of life looks screwy to the other fellow, regardless of the fact it may have more gadgets, subways, escalators, and crooners.)

18. There has got to be a league to keep the peace and the league had better be led at first by the four or five big powers with the guts, the weapons, and the disposition to do it. No big armies of occupation is necessary. It can be done by combined superdooper air power.

19. The peacemakers has got to realize that the Germans is troublemakers by instinct, nature, choice, and profession, and there is not no use trying to sit down and talk things over with them. (Can you talk sense to Gargantua and Toto?)

20. We must not let no war lord escape on the ground he didn't get the right vitamins.

21. The Krauts has shown they is pushovers for any leader or group with train-shed voices, wild eyes, weird ideas, big feet, funny faces, and cockeyed programs. Nothing that has been tried before can cure them.

22. There should be a understanding that while the builders of the bright new world must admit a duty to improve the lot of peoples in many parts of the globe, one way of life can never be merged with no other through a shotgun wedding or the distribution of money through a leaky hose.

23. We all got to keep our noses clean together or we will all go to the cleaner's separately. The big question before the peace commissions is whether we get a happier world out of this war or just a slap-happier one.

24. The peace has got to be made so tough that them Nazis will think the Treaty of Versailles was a New Year card by comparison. The slogan in making the peace should be, "Never trust a black widow spider, a man-eating shark, or a Nazi."

25. Closer attention has got to be paid to the microphone as a instrument of troublemaking, war, and disaster, and there should be a international test for radio orators with a message. Also a thumbs-down sign on free-

dom of the airwaves for noisy dimwits and professional disturbers.

26. All peacemakers should keep pasted in their hats the idea that if we ever have another war the question will not be "What'll we do now?" but "What hit us?" And they got to realize, through things like the V-1, V-2, and V-3 bombs, that another global fracas will be a combination of Dante's *Inferno* and *The Last Days of Pompeii*, with a gooseflesh radio scenario by Orson Welles chucked in for extra creeps.

Note: The above was got up with the help and approval of a lot of service men and women of all sexes. Even the suggestions of Corporal Herman Feinstein and Pfc Matt Hollis didn't do no harm. A rough draft of the general idea was passed around and got hundreds of signatures including those of two Congressman, a dozen famous entertainers, and a lieutenant colonel. The lieutenant colonel was the only one who didn't read it and maybe thought it was another requisition for atabrine.

If I had of had more time I could of got the whole Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, merchant seamen, and even some generals and admirals.

If even as much as one suggestion in the blueprint helps in any way in making a lasting peace it will be O.K. And anyhow my kid can never look me in the face and say I didn't try.

Yours truly,

Oscar Purkey, Pfc

P. S. The greatest danger to the peace is scrapping among ourselves. England has got to understand that to get along with Russia and Uncle Sam she has got to regard



“God Save the King” as taking in a few more people than him. Uncle Sam has got to understand that from the Russian and British angle he can’t always be regarded as the answer man on a global “What’s Your Problem?” program. And the Russians has got to realize that while Russia may be the bear that walks like a man he ain’t the bear that walks like three men.

If we can be as good friends in making peace as we was making war all will come out swell.

## *Chapter XVI*

### THE COMMANDOS LAND IN THE MILL, THE HEADLINES, AND THE RADIO SETS

CAME THE DAWN!

The three peace-parley crashers, disconsolate, embarrassed, alarmed, and a little foggy, were now in the "mill." No definite charges had been decided on, as the Army was yet to conduct an investigation.

Already the brass hats, agog over the incident, were arguing over what to do next.

Some were citing Articles 89 and 90 in the Articles of War covering general misconduct, riotous behavior, and hoodlumism in general. Some were pointing to Article 98 covering all conduct "of a nature to bring discredit upon the military service," such conduct being subject to court-martial.

One or two officers thought there might be a sinister plot behind the episode, but the general opinion among most brass hats, although they didn't say so, was that it was more comic than serious.

That it was an incident that concerned anybody outside of the Army occurred to none. Certainly neither they nor the GI kibitzing commandos, Purkey, Feinstein,

and Hollis, dreamed that at this very moment, and for hours before, teletype machines, typewriters, linotypes, and presses were recording the event for posterity.

They could not know that newspaper delivery trucks in all parts of the world were rumbling through countless cities, towns, and villages bearing newspapers in which they were by no means a minor feature. Or that radio commentators everywhere were giving them something of a global glorification.

Around the sides of the New York Times building during the night the electric running newstape had blazed:

YANKS INVADE PEACE SESSION . . . ASK VOICE IN PEACE

The paper next morning carried the heading:

SOLDIERS HAVE PEACE BLUEPRINT

A headline across the top of the *New York Journal* proclaimed in red ink:

GI'S CRASH PEACE SESSION!

The *Daily Mirror* carried the splash:

JEEPS CRASH  
PEACE GATE

Three Musketeers of Army Muscle in on Diplomats.

MP's Flung into Breach. GI Peace Plan Born.

(Photos on pages 5, 6, and 7)

On the front page of the *Daily News*, with wire photographs which would have startled the boys and which did startle their relatives, appeared the head:

PEACE COMMANDOS IN  
STORMY DEBUT

Yanks Raid Dovecote but Lose Decision.  
Peace Blueprint May Bring Return Bout.  
(Pictures on pages 21, 23, and 26)

The *Tribune*, *Sun*, *Telegram*, *Post*, and *PM* all played up the most incredible tale ever to come out of peace councils, recognizing in the dispatches a yarn so full of human interest that for the moment no city editor found it necessary to assign anybody to bat out a story about the newborn giraffe at the zoo, the dog lost in the subway, the strange case of the one-legged pigeon in City Hall Park, or the latest news about the most recent quintuplets.

In Chicago a headline writer started more than he knew through the headline

NO DOUBLE TALK!—GI SLOGAN.

No one dreamed then that this would catch the public fancy to such an extent that within a few weeks the initials "NDT," standing for this slogan, would be splashed, dug, scratched, and painted on walls of two continents with an enthusiasm rivaling the "V for Victory" crusade.

That phrase "No Double Talk!" somehow seemed to strike a chord in the far quarters of the earth as in a way symbolizing the fears of millions already apprehensive about the operations among the peace councils.

The radio was finding the bizarre invasion of a peace meeting as interesting a subject as the press; and varying viewpoints were expressed by top broadcasters, who discussed it as lengthily as any news event of the day.

Said Raymond Swing in his best analytical manner:

"Something has just happened in Europe far out of the ordinary and to many it may seem merely an amusing episode in a dull day at the peace tables. But it is not wholly improbable that it may be fraught with significance. Three soldiers, gaining entrance to a peace meeting, sought to convey to the diplomats some essential guides to peace, as they saw them through their unofficial eyes.

"They were not warmly received, which I believe unfortunate. This is not to say that such invasions of privacy are to be encouraged. Nevertheless, it is apt to make a profound impression on the peoples of the world that these soldiers should be so deeply concerned about the peace that they would risk humiliation, ridicule, and scorn to present their views.

"While I do not say this will come to pass, it is not beyond reason to assume that perhaps the ideals of these three unimportant men may yet come to be considered worthy of attention by those distinguished personages in whose hands rests the future of civilization. And now for a friendly message . . ."

Gabriel Heatter grew lyrical.

"Somewhere tonight," he said, "the Gods of War are pacing their dark corridors, a frown on their faces, asking, 'What does this mean? Are we at last to be brought to bay by the simple, modest, unpretentious suggestions of three American boys?' Ah, ladies and gentlemen, three names shine out wherever men and women are free tonight—Purkey! . . . Feinstein! . . . Hollis! They may yet rank high up with those of Ethan Allen, Captain Prescott, and the men of Concord and Lexington! And now a few words from your good friend and mine . . ."

Fulton Oursler even put it on his "Cash for Questions" hour:

"Mrs. Millie Nothnagle of Revere Beach, Massachusetts, gets two dollars for this question: 'Is it true about those three soldiers crashing a peace meeting or is it propaganda? And is it a military offense?'

"Well, Mrs. Nothnagle, it is true all right. It was not in the strictest sense a military offense for them to get into this peace meeting but anything conducive to disorder can result in disciplinary action. I guess everything will come out all right.

"John J. Spivak of Derby, Connecticut, gets two dollars for this question: 'Is Oscar Purkey the same Purkey who tried out with the Brooklyn club as a southpaw pitcher three seasons back?'

"I am informed that he is not, Mr. Spivak. The baseball Purkey's first name was Joe and he spelled his last name with a 'B' instead of a 'P.' He was a center fielder."

But nothing was to do more to spread the fame of the three men or keep the interest alive than Walter Winchell's Sunday night broadcast which included these sentences:

"Flash! The GI Peace Huddle Commandos who have been under detention since the incident which put the biggies on page two will be freed soon. They were wrong, but they were right!

"There are rules and customs, but if more Americans displayed the same interest in a good world that these GI's displayed, this world would not be such a baddie!"

## Chapter XVII

### THE NEWS REACHES THE FIRESIDES BACK HOME

THERE WERE NEWSREEL men and reporters in the Purkey flat in West 132 Street, Manhattan, before the Purkeys had recovered even slightly from the shock of what they had just seen in the newspapers. Harriet was in turn flabbergasted, happy, befuddled, and depressed. The first thrill of seeing her husband in the news gave way to a fear he might be shot at sunrise . . . and that she might even at the moment be several sunrises behind the news.

Bucky kept babbling, "Where Dadda?" a question she had recently finished teaching him, but under the circumstances the query was now rather disturbing.

Mr. and Mrs. Michael Purkey just kept wringing their hands, with Mom Purkey insisting now and then that they couldn't shoot Oscar because they had never shot Colonel House.

Harriet was against giving the newspapermen any photo of Oscar, but she yielded at once when a *Mirror* man showed her a photo in an early edition labeled "Pfc Oscar Purkey," which was that of a middle-aged indi-

vidual with handlebar whiskers and a cast in one eye. It was really a photo of one Olaf Persky who had years ago gone twenty-eight days living on nuts as a stunt for the Bernarr Macfadden publications.

As the newsreel men stormed the flat, using the flying wedge formation, Harriet grew irritated and snapped, "You would think we were figuring in a suitcase murder. I suppose you want a diagram of the house with a cross showing where the body was found."

But resistance was futile without what is known in military circles as an air umbrella. Ultimately the Purkey household surrendered unconditionally.

Harriet had to say something in the sound devices. "I really don't know what it is all about," she said, "but I know that my husband felt very strongly that what the peace delegates were doing was no bargain. There is no law against a soldier going all out for peace the same as he goes all out in war, is there? I don't see why it isn't just as important to put up a fight for a better world as to put up a fight for a better foxhole."

It was to go great in the movie houses.

Mom Purkey had to talk for the newsreel audiences, too. She contented herself with telling the world that her boy was one of the greatest men America had ever produced, that he could do no wrong, and that they had a nerve to put him in the brig.

Pop Purkey cleared his throat, adjusted his necktie, muttered, "I should of shaved," and said:

"What's the big complaint against the kid? How could those peace commissioners be any more muddled from what Oscar said than they were before?"

Bucky kept saying, "Where Dadda?", still not getting any definite answer.



The newsreel men left after blowing out three fuses, breaking a lamp, and making nervous wrecks of the whole family.

Reporters kept arriving in what appeared to be assault boats. Finally the besieged and befuddled Purkeys pulled down the shades, disconnected the doorbell, and left word with the janitor that they had gone away for a week.

If Bucky would only stop demanding, "Where Dadda?" . . .

At the Rockaway bungalow of the Feinsteins there was similar chaos.

"Our Herman survives the war all right; now he should get caught in the peace!" moaned Jacob Feinstein, father of the corporal. "Girl children are the best."

"So what can happen?" shrugged Mrs. Feinstein. "Is it a law yes against fighting for peace no?"

"Three men should be so foolish to try to fix up peace for the whole world!" scoffed Papa Feinstein.

"Four men," said Mamma Feinstein. "Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin . . . and now, Feinstein!"

"Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill don't crash peace meetings," moaned Papa Feinstein.

"Can Herman help it if he don't get invitations?" demanded Mamma.

The newspapermen wanted a picture of Herman. By threatening to use the one from the top of one of "Herman's Pink Cards" they got one showing the corporal at the age of sixteen in a one-piece bathing suit.

Then the newsreel men screened Papa and Mamma Feinstein while the nervous parents said a few words for

history. In thousands of movie houses throughout the country Mamma would soon be saying:

"My boy Herman always was a fine son. Always he had good ideas. All he wanted was that there should be no more troubles in the world. If a man in uniform can fight a good war why shouldn't a man in uniform fight a good peace? Only by what I read in the papers do I know he goes to a peace meeting. So who is offering better blueprintings?"

And Jacob Feinstein would be heard:

"A decoration he should get, not a court-martial. Only if he would not be interested in a peace should I be ashamed of my Herman."

Out in Pocahontas, Iowa, reporters had interviewed everybody in any way related to Matt Hollis, or supposed to be, including a Pocahontas lady who said she was Mrs. Matthew Hollis, adding that she hadn't seen him in years and that if she never saw him again it would be O.K.

The situation was somewhat complicated by an interview in Skokie, Illinois, with another woman who said Matt was her husband. She, too, had been long out of touch.

"Working for peace, eh?" she said. "He was no bargain as a peaceful man as I remember."

## *Chapter XVIII*

### GENERAL "HELL-ROARING" SCRIBBEY TRIES TO GET AT THE BOTTOM OF IT—WITH LITTLE SUCCESS

ON THEIR SECOND MORNING in the guardhouse, Purkey, Hollis, and Feinstein were summoned before General T. K. ("Hell-Roaring") Scribbey, one of the Army's more explosive brass hats.

"Ah!" said the General, glaring at the trio. "The Big Three, I presume."

Getting no answer, he proceeded.

"Harrumph-ph-ph! Come now, what was the meaning of this stunt?"

"It was not no stunt, General," began Purkey.

"A stunt if I ever heard of one!" barked the General, "and don't contradict me. Were you all drunk?"

"We certainly wasn't," said Oscar.

"I've found out you were in a slop-chute just before you staged this 'Truth or Consequences' act," roared General Scribbey.

"We had a couple of drinks but were not crocked, sir," said Matt Hollis.

"That makes it even harder to explain," declared

General Scribbey. "Where did you get the idea you could go around barging into peace meetings?"

"Can the stewards rule a foul against a few soldiers for just dropping in at a conference?" asked Feinstein innocently.

"You're damned tootin' they can!"

"We didn't see no harm in it, sir," pleaded Purkey, who was pretty scared. "We was just interested in peace."

"The whole Army's interested in peace. Does that make it all right for it to go around crashing into peace sessions?" asked the General.

"Why not?" asked Feinstein.

"We didn't crash no meetin'," argued Purkey. "We just went in and didn't get out soon enough."

"You're gettin' technical," whispered Feinstein. "If we'd of got thrown out any faster it would of been jet propulsion."

"What about that blueprint?" demanded the General. "Whose idea was that?"

"We all chipped in," said Oscar.

"What kept you from reading it at the peace meeting?" demanded the General. "That must have been your plan."

"We couldn't untrack ourselves in the going," said Feinstein.

"Honest, sir, we didn't even think of the blueprint until we got outside," said Oscar.

"You didn't lose much time giving it to the press and radio," barked the General. "You're a slick trio of publicity hounds if I'm any judge, Harrumph-ph!"

"We weren't thinking much of publicity," insisted Hollis.

"The hell you weren't! The whole business is in all the newspapers and on every radio."

"Cripes, I didn't know it was that good!" whispered Feinstein to Oscar.

"Well," said General Scribbey, "I assume you are familiar with the Articles of War."

This chilled the trio somewhat. Purkey paled a little and Hollis swallowed a cud of tobacco.

"There happen to be a few covering misconduct, riotous behavior, and hoodlumism, you know," said Scribbey. "Harrumph! You forced your way into that meeting. That was misconduct. You disturbed the meeting. That was hoodlumism. And don't forget Article Ninety-six."

"Ninety-six?" asked Oscar.

"Do you know that one?" asked Scribbey.

"That's the one coverin' larceny, perjury, dueling, and rape, ain't it?" stammered Purkey.

"I'm a little mixed up," admitted Feinstein, "but I'm positive there was no dueling."

"Article Ninety-six has nothing to do with larceny, perjury, dueling, or rape," snapped the General.

The boys seemed relieved.

"Article Ninety-six covers any and all conduct of a nature likely to bring discredit on the military service," said the General. "Get that! It seems to cover this case nicely."

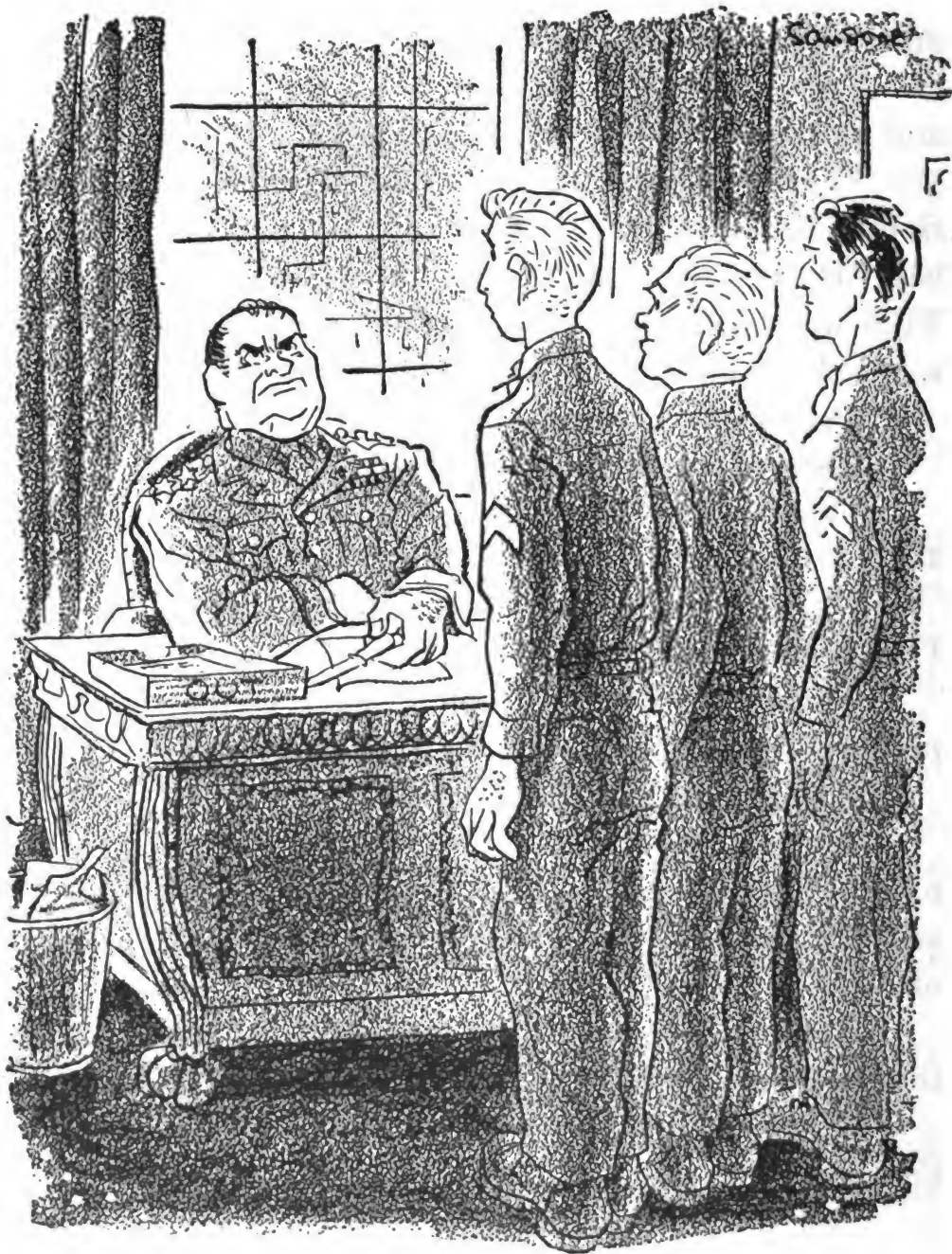
"Gee, sir, the last thing we would do would be anything to bring discredit on the Army," said Purkey.

"Charging us with that is low punchin'," insisted Feinstein.

"Oh, I'm quite aware of your good records as fighters," admitted General Scribbey. "It's too bad you didn't rest on your standing as fighters instead of as peacemakers."

The boys were silent.

"Hollis," said the General, "you're an old-timer.



"Article 96? That's the one coverin' larceny, perjury, dueling, and rape, ain't it?"

You should know better than to be flitting about as a peace-table pixey. How did you get in on this?"

"Me?" replied Hollis. "Well, it's like this. I did it as a penance, and I was about twenty-five years too late, at that."

"Don't be funny," snapped the General. "The point that seems to escape you all is that you have injured the dignity of the service and made a laughingstock of it. The whole cockeyed episode is being played up on the air in a most embarrassing manner."

"Is it really on the radio, sir?" asked Purkey, who feared the consequences at home.

"And how!" roared the General. "Nothing but Purkey and Hollis and Feinstein! Purkey, Hollis, and Feinstein, hour after hour! They haven't mentioned Eisenhower, Patton, or Hodges in two days!"

Oscar let out a low whistle. It annoyed Scribbey.

"Sergeant, I'm giving these three new radio celebrities some extra time to think things over," said the General. "Back to the guardhouse with them!"

"That radio angle," said Oscar, back in the mill. "That's bad, ain't it?"

"It ain't good," said Matt Hollis.

"Yes and no," grinned Feinstein. "If the act went over the way Scribbey says, maybe we'll get a sponsor. Are you over thirty-five? Do you have headaches? Do you get up in the morning with a sluggish feeling? Oh, boy!"

"This radio stuff can do me plenty of harm," sighed Hollis.

"Yeah? How?" asked Feinstein.

"I was just beginnin' to build up a rep back home for

mindin' my own business and keepin' out of trouble," said Matt.

Purkey seemed to be nursing a deeper concern. "Cripes! What about that Articles of War angle?" he blurted. "What's that boil down to?"

"We stand a swell chance of not livin' long enough to know how our postwar world ever comes out," sighed Feinstein.



## *Chapter XIX*

### THE PEACE PARLEY KIBITZERS FIND THEMSELVES FAMOUS. APPLAUSE, OFFERS OF MARRIAGE, HEADLINES, ETC.

BACK HOME THE fame of the three crashers had steadily snowballed. The blueprint had become a subject of general quotation, and so widespread had become public approval of a GI voice in the world of tomorrow that the more talk there was of punishing the trio, the louder were the Bronx cheers.

At a press conference the President had been asked about it and had shown anything but flat disapproval. "It was not military to crash a peace meeting and it is not to be encouraged, of course, but I feel it had its helpful points," he said. "I think the GI Blueprint said a lot of things that needed saying. Certainly no men or women are more deeply concerned about a lasting peace than those who were in the battles."

Prime Minister Churchill, too, had been tolerant. "A brash, exploit and typically Yankee!" he said. "But courage and sincerity were behind it. I can't applaud the gate crashing, but the boys made some well-taken points in their blueprint."

From the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and kindred organizations came demands that the fighting men be permitted a greater voice in the peace councils.

Purkey, Feinstein, and Hollis had become American celebrities overnight, their faces as familiar to newspaper readers as those of the Big Three. They had no idea of the extent of the publicity wave, but presently they began to get inklings.

Not only had the White House, the Secretary of War, and innumerable civil and military biggies been deluged with mail urging the immediate release of the trio, and lauding their high purpose, but England's war figures, much to their surprise, had been hearing from British, Canadian, and other soldiers of the dominions.

Purkey, Feinstein, and Hollis were soon to be overwhelmed at finding their mail full of approving letters not only from soldiers, sailors, Marines, Wacs, and Waves, but from bishops, movie stars, politicians, butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers.

Two items in this connection, however, were to convince them that everything had gotten out of control.

One was a note from One-Eyed Connolly conceding them the title among all modern gate crashers.

The other was about fifty pounds of fan mail consisting of love letters, proposals of marriage, offers to act as literary, radio, and movie agents at 10 per cent of the gross, and cash propositions to indorse blood medicines, hair oils, vitamins, and public-speaking courses.

Matt Hollis didn't dream he would receive a letter from a woman in Spokane offering to adopt him. He didn't know that a press syndicate had been distributing a picture of him taken at about the age of sixteen.

Outranking everything, however, in importance to Oscar, was this letter which Harriet had rushed to him.

DEAR OSCAR:

Well of all things! You in the headlines, and not as a war hero but a peace hero! I hope there's a letter on the way from you giving me the real story. All I know is that the papers and airwaves are full of different versions of what happened. They all leave me dizzy.

The house has been filled with reporters and cameramen and they must be under the impression Bucky and I were with you. I feel as conspicuous as if I were going around in a neat little suit trimmed with neon lights. The Giants want me to throw out the first ball in a "croocial series" with Brooklyn, I've been asked to address the D.A.R., and last night Mrs. Roosevelt mentioned me in her column. A cereal company called up for the right to use a snapshot of Bucky in some new advertising layouts, and people we never heard of are sending him presents. He has so far received a great Dane, a crate of rabbits, and a box of live turtles. I'm afraid to answer the phone for fear the express company wants to ask when to deliver an aardvark.

It all came as such a shock, dear. Our radio was going full blast but I was running the vacuum and paying no attention to it. From time to time I was conscious of names coming out of the air during the soap opera and news broadcasts, names like the Lone Ranger, Admiral Halsey, Josef Stalin, Dick Tracy, and General Patton, but I just yawned and went on with my housework. All of a sudden I heard the name Purkey leap right out of the set. At first I thought it imagination, but then I heard it again, this time it came out Oscar Purkey—no mistake. Well, dear, I took hold of my head with both hands and ran over it to see if my ears were on right. Then I slid slowly to the floor where, curled up with the vacuum cleaner, I heard the details.

Then the neighbors began calling up or rushing in, and did they have things mixed up! The way they got it you had done everything from landing in the Kremlin by balloon to breaking into Mr. Churchill's apartment and making him turn over the major peace problems to you and two buddies at the

point of a gun. One woman told your mother it had come over the air plainly that you had all been court-martialed for driving into a peace meeting in a bulldozer.

We finally got everything fairly straight and while we want to hear it all direct from you, we have decided that what you did was wonderful. Your mother puts your place in history somewhere between George Washington and Commando Kelly. Your dad thinks you are a combination of General MacArthur and President Roosevelt combining the best features of each. As for me I think you're just plain terrific. My new name for you is Joe of Arc.

Bucky has a wider press than Margaret O'Brien already. My face and yours are newsstand features and if your father picks up a paper and sees an edition with no pictures of any member of the Purkey family he denounces the press as corrupt.

Help me pick it up from here, darling. What happens next? What is that court-martial angle? Are you in any serious trouble because of what you did? The papers all praise your actions. I know, of course, why you did it, and I'm prouder of you than ever, even if still a little scared.

All my love,

HARRIET

P.S. Mr. Hinchy who has your flivver stored phoned to say he would fix it up for free. All the neighbors think you are wonderful and want to know when are you coming back. Me too.

## *Chapter XX*

### FREEDOM AT LAST

IT WAS ON A sunny morning two weeks later that Purkey, Feinstein, and Hollis found themselves suddenly freed from the hoosegow. They found, too, a shovel and broom in their hands.

"Kay Peel!" exclaimed Hollis.

"You got a quick brain for dopin' out things from only a little clue," said Oscar.

"Well, it looks like they gave up that idea of trying us as hoodlums," said Feinstein.

"Even if we wanted to be hoodlums, shovels and brooms is the wrong equipment for it," sighed Purkey.

"Shut up, meathead," said Feinstein. "We're lucky to be outdoors with the birds and bees and flowers again."

"Yeah, but it ain't birds and bees we're gonna be workin' around," said Oscar. "Not with these big brooms."

They didn't know the reason for their release but the fact was that the reaction to the peace-crashing episode and to the GI Blueprint had been altogether too widespread and too favorable to make drastic punishment advisable. And words to that effect had reached the brass hats.

Their K.P. detail proved less harrowing than they

feared, and they were in good humor when they ran across Chaplain Tierney at the PX that night. The chaplain had been busy in their behalf all during their incarceration.

"Well, well, well!" he exclaimed. "It's good to see you back in circulation. I had my doubts."

"So did we," said Oscar. "We was startin' to spoil in that jailhouse."

"Is it a parole, a pardon, or just an error?" asked the chaplain.

"Search us!" said Oscar. "All we know is that we're loose and we ain't askin' no questions."

"For a while I thought it might be permanent," said the chaplain. "You got too hot to handle, as they say in baseball. The reaction all over the world was such that it was impossible to treat you as a disgrace to the Army. You're global big shots, you know."

"We heard something along that line, Father," said Matt Hollis. "Now that it's all over, does it shape up O.K. with you?"

"That blueprint was pure genius," said the chaplain. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings! You put a lot of important facts in such simple, straight language that it caught the fancy of millions, including the peace-makers. They're talking the people's language, like you, already."

"On cold dope we didn't figure to get nowhere," said Handpress Hermie. "Incidentally there's another man who should get a little credit—or blame."

"Who?" asked Oscar.

"That snakepit barboy who puts everything into an Old Fashioned cocktail excepting pistachio nuts, celery stalks, and liquid fire," said Feinstein. "Without him we would not of got to the post."

"Maybe not so quick," admitted Purkey.

"I had a little information on that," said the chaplain, "and it worried me."

"We just had a couple," said Oscar. "It was no alcoholic workout."

"It seemed to prove that a drink can be of help in a good cause now and then," admitted the chaplain, "although I wouldn't recommend it in the long run. Don't ever tell what brand it was. Some bright fellow will want to advertise it as the whisky that built the postwar world."

"By the way, Father," put in Feinstein, "one thing's never been explained. I never could figure what brought you to that peace huddle, even makin' special allowances."

"Your tactics were anything but furtive," said Chaplain Tierney. "Everybody in that bar heard you, I guess. And a good friend of yours, who was a friend of mine, thought you were heading into trouble and that I ought to know."

"Yeah," admitted Oscar. "We was pretty gabby. We might as well have carried out our visit with a walky-talky."

"You practically did," declared the chaplain.

"Gee, I was awful glad to see you come in, at that," chirped Oscar.

"That goes for me, too," said Hollis.

"If all suspicion that we are screwballs on the loose has faded out, it's just dandy," said Feinstein. "I was bettin' the other way."

"Come to think of it, Hermie," said Oscar, "you joined in the spirit of the thing awful sudden the afternoon we decided to crash that huddle."

"It looked like a form flop, eh?" said Feinstein.

"Yeah."

"Well, I'll let down my hair and tell you how it worked out. I knew you, Oscar, was just bein' needled into them commando exercises by fears for that kid of yours. As for Matt, I could see he was just doin' his second war in technicolor and didn't want no third heat. Me? Lissen, it was like this—remember Eddie Noonan? Well, the mornin' of the day we decided on that crashin' exploit I got a letter from my sister who seen him in Halloran. He's lost a leg and he's blind!"

"Jeez, I knew he got hit bad.... I remember the night... but I didn't know it was like that," said Purkey.

"Eddie and I was pretty close and it gave me the willies gettin' this letter. I got to thinkin' of all the other good guys that got the worst of it in this fracas... them that won't never see no more especially," Feinstein went on.

"I've seen it happen in two wars," said Hollis. "I guess maybe that was what was in the back of my mind, too."

"I don't remember Noonan," said Chaplain Tierney, "but I've seen so many all bashed up! One thing you can put in the book is this: all the boys in the hospitals and rehabilitation centers are behind anybody who goes out of the way to help bring a peace that will outlaw war. Nobody is stronger for a GI hand in the peace than they."

"Imagine a blind GI there—at a peace meetin'—with his eyes just starin blank at the diplermats!" said Oscar. "What that would do to keep down the double talk!"

"You said somethin'," Feinstein muttered.

"Yeah," said Hollis.

"They don't have to go to the peace sessions," said Father Tierney. "Their blank eyes are fixed on the peace-makers anyhow, and I have a hunch that you boys have made the delegates realize that point."



"As long as we didn't come out of the jailhouse with everybody thinkin' of us as nothin' but monkeys, harmless eccentrics, and radio comics it's a break," said Oscar.

"The concensus seems to be that the three of you rate medals for distinguished service in the face of peace," chuckled the chaplain.

"I'll take a pack of cigarettes instead," said Feinstein.

"Boy, how the radio is playing you up!" exclaimed the chaplain. "And have you seen *Yank*? It's got the blueprint all over the paper."

"Let's check," said Purkey. "We're in the clear, no court-martial is hangin' over us, an' we're gettin' a big radio plug. Does it mean anything?"

"It means plenty," said the chaplain. "It means the whole fight against going back on the pre-armistice pledges, against compromising on ideals and against backsliding, has been put right under the spotlights by the GI Blueprint. Oh, to be sure, a lot of big men were warning against these things. The public speakers and the editorial writers were sounding off, yes. But it was the idea of the GI's suddenly putting the finger on the danger that gave the matter color. Boys, you dramatized the editorials, the pompous-sounding speeches, and the pamphlets. You expressed in a few straight, colorful GI phrases what they were trying to say in the lofty words and tones of men who never say in a paragraph what can be said in a dozen pages."

"Get a load of this fan mail," said Oscar, opening a batch of letters. "Here's one from an Air Force skipper. It just says, 'Nice goin', buddy.' And here's one that says, 'Don't let it throw you.' It's just signed, 'Six Wacs.' "

"Look at this," said Hollis, fumbling with his mail. "It's got the signatures of six medics and it asks why the

hell we didn't let 'em in on it. Them medics know what war is all about if anybody does."

"Hey, whaddaya know!" exclaimed Feinstein as he read something he had taken from an impressive-looking envelope. "It's from the Paris agent of 'Vox Pop.' They want us on the next program short waved."

"Nuts to 'Vox Pop,'" said Purkey. "Hold out for 'Blind Date'!"

## *Chapter XXI*

### TRANSFER TO ENGLAND. AN AMAZING SUMMONS

THE FOLLOWING WEEK the outfit got orders to move to England preparatory to embarking for the United States. It had seen some of the longest and toughest fighting of the war, and one of the first to be picked for the return home.

Back in America Purkey, Feinstein, and Hollis were still headline stuff, and the movement which had grown out of their exploit was rapidly spreading. Veterans' organizations were still clamoring for an expression of the GI viewpoint at the peace tables, the "No Double Talk" slogan had now found an outlet in "NDT" on celluloid buttons being worn by several million Americans, and thousands of signatures were being put to a petition in the soldiers' and sailors' hospitals approving the GI Blueprint for Peace, and adding new suggestions.

The three peace-conference crashers had long since received offers to do bits in movies. Feinstein had had three race horses named after him, and Oscar had word from the gas station that something much better than his old job awaited him.

They had been in London only two days when they were floored one noon by the arrival of an imperial lim-

ousine, with uniformed chauffeur. Out bounced a colonel with orders to pick up Feinstein and Purkey and Hollis for special detail.

Co-operation from their own brass hats was complete, surprisingly so. Presently they were in the car speeding toward the center of London and very bewildered.

"They're reopening our case," whispered Hollis, always a gloom. "We can still wind up at hard labor or worse."

"What's worse?" asked Feinstein.

"Any peace huddles in London?" asked Oscar furtively. "If so maybe they wanna repeat performance."

"What's cookin', Colonel?" Hollis finally asked of the accompanying officer.

"It's beyond me," was the answer. "All I know is that I have orders to bring all of you to the President's suite at the Savoy."

"The president of what?" asked Feinstein.

"The President of the United States!" said the colonel. "He's here for a meeting of the Big Three and wishes to see you."

"There's a catch in it," said Oscar.

"We got one thing in our favor. We voted for him," said Feinstein.

Purkey, Feinstein, and Hollis were being ushered into a huge room before they realized it. The President of the United States sat at a table at the far end. For once the boys' courage deserted them. They were scared, nervous, and thoroughly rattled. The President's smile eased the situation and a chuckle from him as he held out his hand reassured them.

"Well, gentlemen," said the President, shaking their hands, "there is a lot of good-will stuff going on and it

seems to me you boys are entitled to a share. Understand this; as your commander in chief, I disapprove thoroughly of some phases of what you did. But as an associate worrier about the future world, I make definite allowances for your sincerity and courage. In my deep enthusiasms concerning a just peace I, too, have been accused of being a little crazy."

"Being crazy in such good company as you ain't half bad," grinned Pfc Purkey.

"You've become quite famous back in America," continued the President. "You've caught the public imagination, and so has your blueprint. The folks back home want to see you."

"If this is a dream, don't wake me," said Matt.

"Do we rate all this?" asked Feinstein.

"No," said the President, "but it's gone beyond your control, and—er—mine, too. There is a feeling you can help influence a good many people at home who are doing just what your GI Blueprint warns against—losing sight of the goal posts. There's considerable wobbling going on back there. The isolationists are at it again. Some legislative leaders are again blocking the idea of American participation in a world peace organization. We've got to fight this. Some of the speakers who are trying to combat it think it would help to have you boys in the entourage. You can also be a big help in a peace-bond drive. That's how important you've become."

The trio was too stupified to say anything.

"I'm having you sent back to America," continued the President. "You'd like to go home, wouldn't you?"

"Would wel" they exclaimed.

"Would you like to return at once by air transport?" asked the President.

"What! No jet planes?" exclaimed Oscar.

## *Chapter XXII*

### ARRIVAL AT LA GUARDIA AIRPORT. HIZZONER GETS A LITTLE CONFUSED ON HIS WELCOMES

TWO DAYS LATER the threesome came out of the clouds over La Guardia Airport, New York, to find reception committees, brass bands, drum corps, motorcycle cops, delegations from veterans' organizations, peace societies, mothers' clubs, and boys' clubs awaiting the landing.

"They Dood It" . . . "Three Of A Kind" . . . "Uncle Sam Is Proud of You" . . . "Welcome Home" . . . "First In War, First In Peace, Last in Double Talk" . . . These and scores of similar banners established the mood.

The "NDT" symbol was everywhere.

The crowd struggled to break through the police line and swarm onto the field as the home-coming celebrities alighted, and the battle to get them off the field and into the reception room of the big airport was no minor engagement.

Mom Purkey collapsed under the emotion and had to have emergency treatment. Pop Purkey, wowed by the demonstration for his boy, felt that he himself had served in the wrong war.

Harriet was there with Bucky in her arms, and the

reunion with Oscar was the answer to a cameraman's dream.

"Gee, you look so extra-beautiful!" exclaimed Oscar, unconscious of the cameras. "And you took off weight."

"I only regret that I had but two chins to give for my country," said Harriet. "Let me have another big look at my hero!"

"Gee, Harriet, I missed you so much it was agony," said Oscar. "My heart hurt me worse than my feet, no foolin'. Look at Bucky! He acts scared of me."

"Why wouldn't he be scared? He's always shy of strangers."

"Gosh, but it was a terrible long war for a married man to get in, honey."

"And it was just as tough on a married woman, dear. How does it feel to be home again?"

"Think of it, Harriet, I can concentrate on what's happening to me and you instead of to Asia, Africa, and all them places!"

"Now just pull her closer to you and hold it," barked a photographer for the eighteenth time, interrupting them.

They didn't mind in the least.

Corporal Herman Feinstein's pop, mom, three sisters, and fourteen cousins were on hand, as was "Long Shot" Charlie Malkan, an old race-track associate who had thought to bring along some special information on a daily double in Mexico City.

"It's a skinner called Bouncing Home in the first," said Malkan, "with...lemme see...just a minute...and Grand Party in the second half. On the dope they gimme it's no contest."

"Bouncing Home and Grand Party!" exclaimed

Feinstein. "To hell with the dope! It's the hunch of the day. Get me down a case note."

Presently the celebrities and their relatives were whizzing over the Triborough Bridge into Manhattan and thence along the East River to Fourteenth Street and down Lafayette to Park Row and City Hall.

Confetti, streamers, and torn newspapers snowed down from windows along the route. Crowds cheered and at every halt some cuties broke from the curb, climbed onto the auto, and embraced the heroes.

City Hall was jammed as the party walked up the steps to be welcomed by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia on one of his most arduous days.

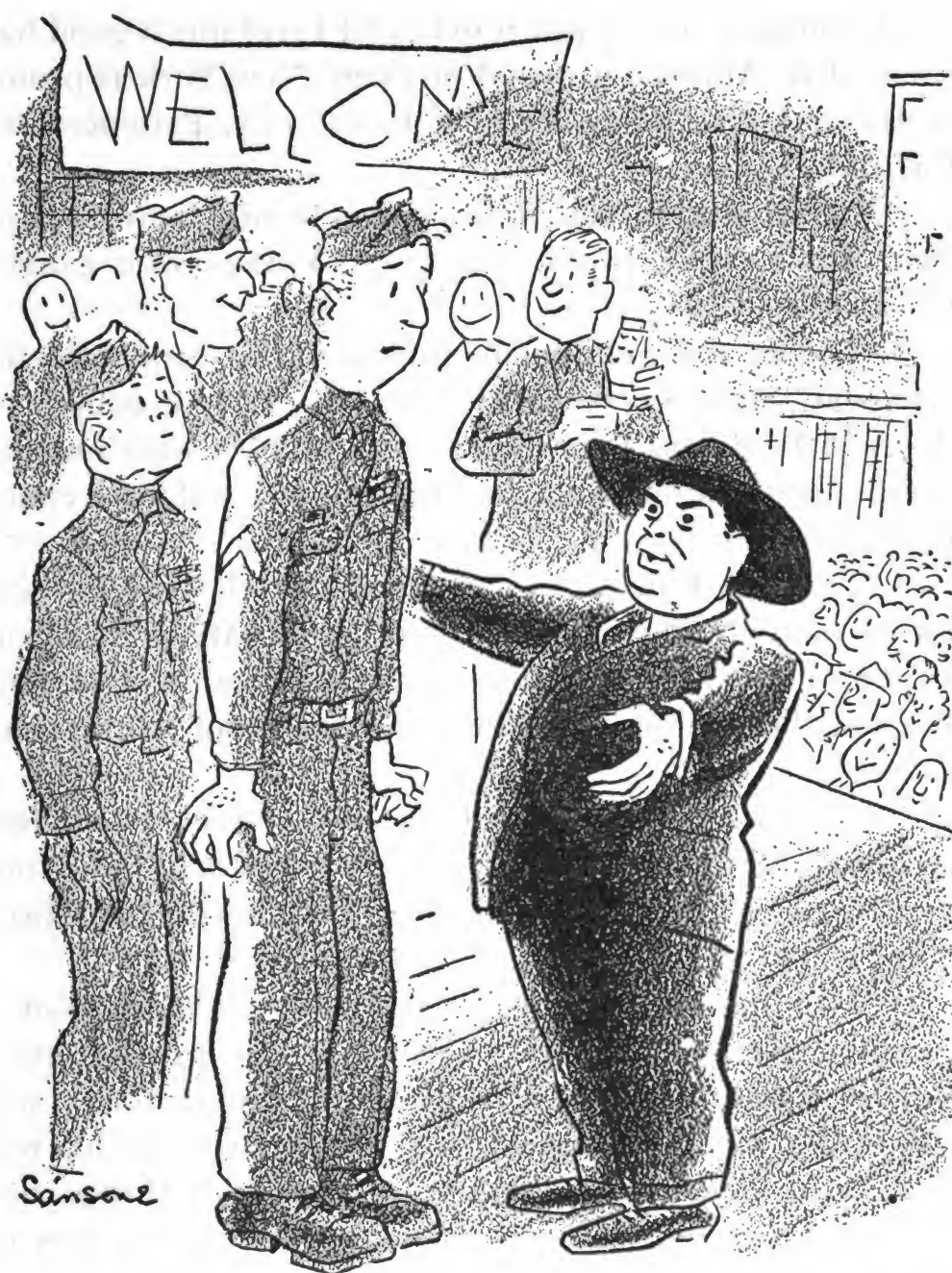
"It is a great pleasure," said Hizzoner, "for me to stand here and welcome these two intrepid Marines whose exploits in the Pacific jungles have stirred all America. And" (turning to Purkey) "this full-blooded member of the Seneca Indian tribe is..."

A secretary tugged at the Mayor's coat sleeve and whispered excitedly. There were three receptions on the book for the day and he had become a little mixed up.

"Sorry," he smiled. "These are busy days. Ahem. I am proud to have this opportunity to welcome home three colorful Yanks who, as members of the armed forces in Europe, proved quite as determined in the ways of peace as they did in the ways of war. They are boys after my own heart.

"They do things first and look up the rules later. Once they think they are right they go ahead. Over there they did something that was against precedent, tradition, and the rules of polite conduct. It wasn't according to Hoyle. Well, they had a sense of mission and a determination to get things done. That's what I like."





**"...this full-blooded member of the Seneca Indian tribe..."**

The crowd laughed.

"Now I wouldn't recommend the repetition of that sort of thing, but they put it over and I feel much good has come of it. America is proud of them. New York is proud of them. I give 'em the keys to the city. Patience and fortitude!"

The boys then had to say a few words. Herman and Matt got a hand, but it was Oscar Purkey who caught the crowd's fancy.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this must be happening to somebody else," he said. "It seems like only a couple of days ago I was just another guy in a foxhole with nobody payin' no attention to me, and now all of a sudden I could be Humphrey Bogart.

"Gee, all I done was worry about the bright new world bein' bright and not just dumb. Me and Herm Feinstein and Matt Hollis didn't expect nothin' like this. We just thought one war should be plenty for a long time to come.

"I got a kid like lots of GI's and I guess they all feel anything they could do or say to help keep them kids from getting their numbers pulled out of fishbowls was worth doing.

"War has got so tough it has no more glory than a barroom riot, believe me. You ain't just fightin' men. You're fightin' machinery, madhouse inventions, and things out of a nightmare. In a way I guess we all was battlin' for democracy, freedom, and all them things, but what me and my buddies was really fightin' for was to see that war got such a sock in the jaw that it would go down for the full count.

"The four freedoms I was battlin' for was freedom from abduction centers, freedom from gettin' shoved around by top sergeants, freedom from canned eggs, and

freedom from havin' my family busted up every now and then.

"We seen things different. We got the right slant on bullies, greaseballs, double talkers, supermen, and dopes. I guess in the past we was all dopes and all I hope is we got cured. I thank you."

The crowd roared approval. There were more pictures and handshaking. Corporal Feinstein managed to break away in a sedan filled with assorted Feinsteins bound for Far Rockaway. The Purkeys were ultimately transported to the West 132 Street flat, Hollis coming along at their insistence. Once there Dad Purkey proposed a little snifter and wanting to be fancy, suggested, "What about a nice Old Fashioned?"

Hollis and Oscar gave him a strange look.

"I didn't know you even knew how to make one," said Oscar.

"I don't," admitted the old man, "but I can try."

"Not a chance," exclaimed Matt Hollis, as he and Oscar recalled their last experience with an Old Fashioned concocted by a green hand.

They settled for a beer.

Hollis presently excused himself, saying he had somebody he had to look up downtown, and making a date with Oscar for the next day.

## *Chapter XXIII*

### ALONE AT LAST. PEACE, DID YOU SAY?

THE PURKEYS all sat down to a home-cooked meal by Ma Purkey and it was late in the day before the old folks realized that Oscar and Harriet might get a kick out of being alone.

"Well, the good Lord must have taken a special liking to you, Oscar," said Mom as she gave Oscar another hug before going to her rooms with Pop Purkey. "To think you're back safe and sound again! God is good."

"You can say that again," declared Oscar. "No foolin', Mom, He was awful close over there. And I guess the world had better keep Him close in all them new plans for a better world. Them plans ain't got a chance with any other tie-up."

"Lord love you, son," said Mom.

"By the way, Father Malachi was asking for you this morning," said Pop Purkey.

"Swell," said Oscar.

"He says he knows a chaplain named Tiernan who was with your outfit."

"It wasn't Tierney, Bart Tierney, was it?"

"That could be the name. Was he with you?"

"Was he with me! And how! What a priest!"

"Them chaplains was a big help, I guess."

"You'll never know how much. Believe me, they was right out of the Bible and this Chaplain Tierney was God in an iron hat and Army shoes. Nothin' in the church will ever seem misty to me and hard to understand from now on."

"My man's really got religion," exclaimed Harriet proudly.

"If I ain't, it's my own tough luck, babe," said Oscar.

That evening, alone at last with Oscar, Harriet wanted to know in greater detail just what was to be required of him from Uncle Sam under the terms of his return home.

"The way I get it," said Oscar, "me and the boys is gonna do a swing around th' circle, showin' up at some peace-bond drives and beatin' our gums in a campaign for a lastin' peace and against them home-front appeasers who is for holdin' out on a world tie-up."

"Nothing doing, darling," insisted Harriet. "I gave you up long enough for the war without giving you up all over again for the peace."

"Aw, I get ten days with you before startin' out," he grinned.

"You're getting too famous, anyhow," said Harriet. "Did you see *Life*? It has pictures of you and your pals in a two-page spread, with an editorial approving GI delegates to the peace table and even suggesting that you, Hollis, and Feinstein be on the delegation."

"Yeah, I seen it," said Oscar. "Whaddaya know about that! Me at a peace conference! How'd you like bein' the wife of a peace delergate, honey bunch? Can't you see a big piece in th' paper readin', 'As Sir Anthony Eden concluded his address in the great marble hall, the Honorable

Oscar Purkey, representing the Arsenul of the Democrats, rose to reply. He spoke with the characteristical Purkey poise givin' glammer and a aroma of strength to the big huddle. It was his debutt as a global orator but he lended éclair and salve la fare to the occasion. The entire delergation lept to its feet and cheered him to the echoes as he closed with a firm 'Lissen, ya bums, if you don't wanna cook up another war you better do what uncle says and come through with what it takes...' "

"Nice reading," said Harriet, "but the papers would have to add another paragraph."

"Yeah? What?"

"They would have to say: 'As the Honorable Oscar Purkey got to his feet to acknowledge the applause there was a strange interruption. His wife, Harriet, swooped down, grabbed him by the seat of the pants, told the conference she was sick of doing the dishes without any help from him, and dragged him to the nearest dock.' "

"Would you jesperdize the future welfare of the human race by a impolite act like that?" demanded Oscar.

"Just put me to the test," said Harriet.

"O.K., honey," said Oscar. "It's your postwar world as much as mine."

Bucky burst into the room at this point, toy bazooka in hand.

"Ack! Ack! Ack!" he sputtered, bringing his old man under direct fire.

Pfc Purkey regarded him with amazement.

The kid bolted into another room and reappeared with an antitank gun, a bolo knife, and some toy hand grenades.

"Ack! Ack! Boom! Bing!"

"What goes on?" asked Oscar.

"You dead. Faw down!" ordered Bucky, giving no quarter.

"You'd better do as he says," suggested Harriet. "Just to please him. It's nothing personal. He thinks he is a terrific fighter. It's the Purkey complex."

"Geel!" exclaimed Oscar, as he took his position on the floor, a dead duck to his son's eyes. "Don't he know there's a armistice?"

"Shush!" warned Harriet. "The only time he didn't grin when I mentioned your name was once when I told him his father was a red-hot champion of permanent peace."

"Ack! Ack! Ack!" sputtered the Purkey offspring, with special violence now.

"Peace!" mused Pfc Oscar Purkey. "Ain't it wonderful!"

Matt Hollis, having purposely found a particularly isolated café, was leaning against the far end of the bar trying to forget. Not to forget the war, the peace exploit, or the welcome home. No, not that. Matt was trying to dismiss from his mind a distinct impression that, just outside the La Guardia Airport, he had caught a glimpse of a certain face from Pocahontas, Iowa. And that in the throng at City Hall Park he had seen another reminding him of adventures in Skokie, Illinois.

"Seems good to be back, eh?" remarked the bartender.

"Yes and no," said Matt.

"Well, anyhow, your fightin' days are over," said the bar boy.

"Yeah?" said Hollis, "Sometimes I wonder!"

Out in Rockaway Handpress Hermie Feinstein was going over his *Racing Form*. He liked to note the entries

and the cryptic comment of the handicappers. Now there was one that held his eyes:

*"Bright New World . . . In good hands."*

He scratched out the comment to make it read:

*"Bright New World . . . Overdue; looks fit and ready now."*



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